







*A PAGEANT OF THE  
DANCE AND BALLET*







*Photo: Pearl Freeman*

MME ADELINE GENÉE

President of the Association of Operatic Dancing, of which Her Majesty  
the Queen is Patroness

A PAGEANT  
OF  
THE DANCE & BALLET

By

MARK EDWARD PERUGINI

*Author of*

*"The Omnibus Box," "Victorian Days and Ways,"*  
*etc.*

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## *DEDICATORY PREFACE*

DANCE-LOVERS of to-day have, I feel, a right to know that this volume is not a mere reprint of my earlier work, *The Art of Ballet*, which, completed in 1914 and published in 1915, promptly went out of print. Largely rewritten, with new chapters, new illustrations and a Chronology added, it is in effect a new and even more comprehensive survey of the evolution of the Dance and Ballet.

In its original form the book was very favourably reviewed by the leading critics of that time ; but, in addressing a newer generation, both of critics and of dance students, I feel it is only fair to them and myself, to explain at the outset what the general purport of the book actually is, and also what it is not.

Firstly, it is *not* intended as a detailed record of ballet production in the various countries in which the art has been encouraged ; secondly, it is *not* simply a “*history...of...the...Ballet*” . . .

### **ERRATUM**

Since the first edition of this *Pageant of the Dance and Ballet* was published in 1935, the Association of Teachers of Operatic Dancing has been granted a Royal Charter, and is now to be known as “The Royal Academy of Dancing” ; consequently, in reading the present issue, the latter title should be understood wherever the former appears.

...countless hours of artistic delight given me by dancers, past and present, and because of my admiration for the gallant courage and perseverance shown by the younger generation in attacking the arduous work and artistic problems involved in the study of the Dance in these times, I gratefully dedicate this volume to All Dance Students of To-day, and of To-morrow.

MARK EDWARD PERUGINI



## BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

IN covering so wide a field a full bibliography is impossible, but to dance students the following list of leading authorities, supplemented by others referred to in the text, may prove helpful : *The Attic Theatre*, by A. E. Haigh ; *La Danse Grecque Antique*, by M. Emmanuel ; *Roman Life and Manners under the Early Empire*, by L. Friedländer ; *Dramatic Traditions of the Dark Ages*, by Joseph S. Tunison (University of Chicago Press) ; *The Mediæval Stage*, by E. K. Chambers (Oxford Press, 1912) ; *Orchésographie*, by Thoinot Arbeau (1588) ; *Des Ballets Anciens et Modernes*, by Père Menestrier (1682) ; *La Danse Antique et Moderne*, by De Cahuzac (1754) ; *The Code of Terpsichore*, by Carlo Blasis (1830) ; *Dictionnaire de la Danse*, by G. Desrat (1895) ; *Dancing in all Ages*, by Edward Scott (1899) ; *Histoire de la Danse*, by F. de Menil (1905) ; *The Russian Ballet*, by C. E. Johnson (1912) ; *The Dance ; Its Place in Art and Life*, by T. and M. W. Kinney (1914) ; *Some Studies in the Ballet*, by Arnold Haskell (1928) ; *The Art of Mime*, by Irene Mawer (1932) ; *The Revived Greek Dance*, by Ruby Ginner (1933) ; *Anna Pavlova*, by Victor Dandré (1933) ; the *Bibliography of the Dance*, by Cyril W. Beaumont, a work of practical value to every student of dance history ; *To-night the Ballet*, by Adrian Stokes (1934) ; and Arnold L. Haskell's *Balletomania* (1934).

To these should be added that faithful chronicle of Dance history for the past quarter-century, *The Dancing Times*, to the Proprietors of which I am greatly indebted for the friendly loan of several blocks for illustration.



## CONTENTS

	PAGE
DEDICATORY PREFACE . . . . .	5
BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE . . . . .	7

### BOOK I

#### THE FIRST ERA

CHAPTER		
I.	PRELUDÉ . . . . .	15
II.	EGYPT . . . . .	21
III.	GREECE : THE DANCE . . . . .	26
IV.	ROME : MIME AND PANTOMIME . . . . .	36
V.	THE MIDDLE AGES . . . . .	41
VI.	THE RENAISSANCE . . . . .	50
VII.	ELIZABETHAN DANCE-LOVERS . . . . .	57
VIII.	ARBEAU'S " ORCHÉSOGRAPHIE," 1588 . . . . .	67
IX.	SCENIC EFFECT : THE ENGLISH MASQUE AS BALLET . . . . .	76
X.	COURT BALLETS IN ITALY AND FRANCE, 1609-1650 . . . . .	86

### BOOK II

#### THE SECOND ERA

XI.	THE TURNING POINT : LOUIS XIV AND HIS ACADEMY OF DANCING, 1651-1675 . . . . .	97
XII.	MIME, ITALIAN COMEDY AND ENGLISH PANTOMIME . . . . .	107
XIII.	ITALIAN PLAYERS AND THE " THEATRES OF THE FAIRS " . . . . .	117
XIV.	BALLET IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY LONDON . . . . .	122
XV.	CAMARGO, 1710-1770 . . . . .	132
XVI.	JEAN GEORGES NOVERRE, 1727-1810 . . . . .	137
XVII.	THE HOUSE OF VESTRIS . . . . .	144
XVIII.	GUIMARD THE GRAND, 1743-1816 . . . . .	151
XIX.	DESPRÉAUX, POET OF THE DANCE . . . . .	163
XX.	A CENTURY'S CLOSE . . . . .	170

## BOOK III

## THE TAGLIONI ERA

CHAPTER		PAGE
XXI.	THE EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY . . . . .	177
XXII.	CARLO BLASIS, 1803-1878 . . . . .	183
XXIII.	MARIE TAGLIONI, 1804-1884 : "SYLPHIDE" . . . . .	192
XXIV.	CARLOTTA GRISI, FANNY CERITO AND LUCILE GRAHN . . . . .	202
XXV.	DECLINE, AND REVIVAL . . . . .	213

## BOOK IV

## THE MODERN ERA

XXVI.	BALLET AT THE ALHAMBRA THEATRE, 1854-1894 . . . . .	219
XXVII.	BALLET AT THE ALHAMBRA THEATRE, 1894-1914 . . . . .	227
XXVIII.	BALLET AT THE EMPIRE THEATRE, 1884-1902 . . . . .	237
XXIX.	BALLET AT THE EMPIRE, 1903-1914 . . . . .	247
XXX.	MEMORIES—RUSSIAN AND OTHERWISE . . . . .	262
XXXI.	THE PAGEANT OF RECENT YEARS . . . . .	273
XXXII.	FINALE, AND—THE FUTURE . . . . .	289
A CHRONOLOGY OF THE DANCE AND BALLET . . . . .		299
INDEX . . . . .		311

## *LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS*

	<i>Frontispiece</i> <i>FACING PAGE</i>
MME ADELINE GENÉE . . . . .	. . . . .
THE DANCE OF ANCIENT EGYPT . . . . .	. . . . .
THE DANCE OF ANCIENT GREECE . . . . .	. . . . .
A TORCH DANCE OF 1463 . . . . .	. . . . .
DANCERS OF THE 15TH CENTURY . . . . .	. . . . .
"DÉCOR" IN THE 16TH CENTURY . . . . .	. . . . .
A "GAILLARDE" OF THE 16TH CENTURY . . . . .	. . . . .
FRENCH BALLET IN THE 17TH CENTURY . . . . .	. . . . .
ITALIAN COMEDY OF THE EARLY 18TH CENTURY . . . . .	. . . . .
THE DUCHESSE DU MAINE . . . . .	. . . . .
Mlle PRÉVÔT . . . . .	. . . . .
BALON . . . . .	. . . . .
Mlle CAMARGO . . . . .	. . . . .
JEAN GEORGES NOVERRE . . . . .	. . . . .
Mlle SALLÉ . . . . .	. . . . .
COSTUME IN 18TH CENTURY CLASSICAL BALLET . . . . .	. . . . .
GAETAN VESTRIS, OF "THE HOUSE OF VESTRIS" . . . . .	. . . . .
Mlle GUIMARD . . . . .	. . . . .
DESPRÉAUX . . . . .	. . . . .
CARLO BLASIS . . . . .	. . . . .
A LESSON IN THE MINUET . . . . .	. . . . .
MARIE TAGLIONI . . . . .	. . . . .
FANNY ELSSLER . . . . .	. . . . .
CARLOTTA GRISI . . . . .	. . . . .
FANNY CERITO . . . . .	. . . . .
LUCILE GRAHN . . . . .	. . . . .
THE FAMOUS "PAS DE QUATRE" OF 1845 . . . . .	. . . . .
ENRICO CECCHETTI . . . . .	. . . . .
MME ANNA PAVLOVA . . . . .	. . . . .
MME ADELINE GENÉE AS "SWANILDA" IN "COPPÉLIA" . . . . .	. . . . .
MME TAMARA KARSAVINA . . . . .	. . . . .

*LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS*

	FACING PAGE
MISS PHYLLIS BEDELLS . . . . .	240
MME MARIE RAMBERT . . . . .	241
MISS RUBY GINNER . . . . .	256
MISS IRENE MAWER . . . . .	257
ALICIA MARKOVA AND ANTON DOLIN . . . . .	274
M. LEONIDE MASSINE . . . . .	275
MISS NINETTE DE VALOIS . . . . .	290
" LES SYLPHIDES " . . . . .	291

*BOOK I*

*THE FIRST ERA*



## CHAPTER I

### *PRELUDE*

**T**O such of the younger generation as may be unmindful of historic backgrounds, the mere word "Ballet" presumably signifies the "Russian Ballet," for they have grown up in a period when that particular type has been prominently before the public, and they can, perhaps, hardly realise that there has ever been any other of interest.

Ballet has existed in some form or other, primitive or sophisticated, for about two thousand years. A human activity with such a record may not seem to some of such impressive importance as, let us say, Politics, Fashion, or Crime ; but since it has so long appealed to the æsthetic sense of mankind it can hardly be lacking in artistic elements of permanent value. It may be taken for granted that, whether it has or has not yet achieved its highest form, Ballet is an art in itself, and has so long and interesting a history as to justify anyone who cares to play the chronicler, or to read his record.

Before setting out to travel the road of the past, however, let us for a moment consider the curious point that there *was* a period when we actually had in London two theatres at which, for over a quarter of a century, Ballet was the chief attraction, a fact unique in the annals of the British stage.

Ballets had, and have, been produced elsewhere from time to time ; we have seen operas, pantomimes, burlesques, of which they formed a part. At earlier periods, as in the 'Forties of last century, they were also seen as separate items in the programme of an Operatic season ; and there has been a remarkable revival of interest in recent years. But in the whole history of the British stage there was never before, or since, a time when *two* theatres in London continuously presented Ballet as their chief attraction for over twenty-five years.

It should also be noted that this sustained existence of Ballet in England was without the advantages of State

aid, such as it has received in Paris, Milan, Rome, Vienna, Moscow, Copenhagen and elsewhere on the Continent, where the physical advantages of dancing and the artistic value of Ballet are fully appreciated. The arts must flourish haphazard here !

Some critics have decried it because it ignores the spoken word ; others because of the predominance of dancing ; and yet others will not admit that it is worthy to be called an "Art" at all ; but such misunderstanding of the technical basis, as well as of the artistic possibilities of Ballet as seen at its best, argues also certain limitations in its opponents. Not for such are the music of rhythmically moving lines, subtleties of mimetic expression, modulating harmonies of form and colour, nor all the wealth of historic association and romantic charm which a knowledge of the history of the Dance recalls.

Those who deprecate the existence of Ballet might remember that many others have found it, as that lively eighteenth-century author, Colley Cibber, regrettably admitted it was found in *his* time, "a pleasing and rational entertainment." That it *is* pleasing many know from seeing some of the better modern examples ; as to whether it can be considered "rational" depends so much on the meaning given to that word. All rational people speak in prose ; habitually to speak in verse might be considered quite irrational ; but are we to banish poetry from the world because it is not the common form of speech ?

Ballet, as an art, is no less rational than Poetry, Drama, Music, Sculpture, or Painting—all of which exist by *their* conventions, all of which in principle it employs ; to all of which it is akin ; and when looking at a modern ballet, we do well to consider the long train of reasoned thought and of artistic tradition that lie behind the particular performance we may see to-day.

What is it that we see ? An orchestra of dancers who are also players, who give life to the imaginative creations of an author, or a number of authors working harmoniously together in terms of rhythmic movement

and mimetic expression, with the aid also of music and of scenic effect.

Every one of these dancers has had to undergo a special and severe training, the traditions of which reach back through centuries till lost in primal obscurity. Each dancer has an allotted place at any given moment in the general scheme ; every group, and the dispersal of a group—like the formation and modulation of chords in music—is part of an ordered plan. Every step of every dancer, every gesture, every phrase of music, is composed or selected to express a particular idea or sequence of ideas ; every colour, and each change of tone in the whole symphony of hues, has been appraised ; not a thing that happens is haphazard.

Noverre, the great eighteenth-century choreographer, declared that “dancing is the fundamental basis of Ballet” ; but he also warned us against those who “dance merely for the sake of dancing, imagining that all consists in the action of the legs.” His suggestions as to what a choreographer must know (including “a smattering of geometry”), and his views on Ballet composition as expressed in his enchanting Letters ; and also the works of that even more influential *maitre-de-ballet*, Carlo Blasis, all insist that, while dancing is essential, it is not the sole element that goes to the making of a ballet.

The four basic elements of theatrical Ballet are Dancing, Miming, Music and *Décor*, or scenic effect, including, of course, in this last the costumes and colour schemes, as well as the actual “scenery” and lighting ; and it is in the proper harmonising of these four elements that the true art of Ballet composition consists. Each has its individual history, and all have been combined in varying proportions at various periods, but it is only in the past hundred and fifty years or so that they have, in the increasing richness of their individual development, been harmoniously blended to give us this separate, protean and beautiful art—the Ballet of the Theatre.

Many of the older writers on dancing speak of almost

all concerted dances as "ballets," and refer to the "ballets" of the Egyptians, the Greeks and the Romans; but the Abbé Menestrier, writing in the seventeenth century, rightly emphasised the distinction between dances that are *only* "dances," and those that properly approximate to "Ballet."

It is to be remembered that it is possible to dance and not represent any particular idea; to dance merely for the sake of movement, as when a child dances for joy, *not in order to represent the joy of another*, which is the province of the Mime; and it is, of course, equally possible to mime without dancing. But the best ballet-dancer is he, or she, who has the artistic intelligence and training to do both, whose dancing and mimetic art are interpretative of the thought or emotion, of the poetic or dramatic themes, provided by author and choreographer.

Speaking of certain Egyptian and Greek figure-dances, and their approximation to Ballet as he knew it, Menestrier wrote : "*J'appelle ces Danses—'Ballet,' parce qu'elles n'étoient pas de simples Danses comme les autres, mais des Représentaions ingénieuses, des mouvements du Ciel et des Planètes, et des évolutions du labyrinth d'où Thesée sortit.*" That is a distinction to be remembered by any who may look on the Art of Ballet as simply—dancing, even though dancing be, as it is, one of its essential elements.

Yet another distinction is to be considered; that between "Ballet" and "the Ballet of the Theatre." In a sense the Egyptians, the Greeks, the Romans, indeed, all peoples in past ages have had dances that were "*représentaions ingénieuses.*" There have been entertainments, too, of which dancing formed a considerable part, such as our English "masques," which were spoken of contemporaneously as "ballets." But though they may from convention have been so called, they were never more than partly akin with the true *Ballet du Théâtre* as seen to-day. They never exhibited that balance and harmony of subordinated and *developed* arts which the best examples of later times have shown;

and they were not seen in the public theatre as a form of dramatic entertainment different from others.

We have but to consider for a moment what were the musical and scenic resources of the Greek and Roman stage, and compare them with the resources of modern orchestration and scenic effect, to realise one of the essential differences between antique "Ballet" and that of to-day. But apart from this difference—which arises from the development of the several elements through the centuries—one may find more than one ancient definition of "Ballet" that appears apt enough to-day, for the difference is not so much one of principle as this matter of artistic resources and the manner in which they are used.

Athenæus, a second-century Greek critic, declared : "Ballet is an imitation of things said and sung"; and Lucian, that : "It is by the gesture, movements and cadences that this imitation or representation is made up, as the song is made up by the inflections of the voice"; a particularly happy illustration, for inflections might well be described as "gestures" of the voice.

Yet again, Menestrier (who, besides writing a history of Ballet, also wrote on Music, and was author of numerous poems and libretti) declared : "Ballet is an imitation like the other arts, and that much has in common with them. The difference is, that while the other arts only imitate certain things—as painting, which expresses the shape, colour, arrangement and disposition of things—Ballet expresses the *movement* which Painting and Sculpture could not express, and so can represent the nature of things, and those characteristics of the soul which only can find expression by such movement. This imitation is achieved by the movements of the body, which are the interpreters of the passions and of the inmost feelings; and, even as the body has various parts composing a whole and making a beautiful harmony, so one uses instruments and their accord to regulate those movements which express the effect of the passions of the soul."

Such definitions are of historic interest, but hardly

meet the case of modern theatrical Ballet ; and leave something to seek in the matter of brief yet comprehensive definition.

A ballet is, in effect, a form of drama ; and it is with the historical evolution of that form in view that I venture, before talking of its history, to suggest as a simple definition that : “ a Ballet is a series of solo and concerted dances with mimetic actions, accompanied by music and scenic accessories, all expressive of a poetic idea or series of ideas, or a dramatic story, provided by an author or choreographer.”

There have, of course, been modern ballets that did not tell a dramatic story ; but one feels that as a form of Drama the true Ballet of the theatre should. Such have been the best of those of Noverre, of Blasis, of Perrot, Nuittier, Théophile Gautier, and of later composers of Ballet, such as Taglioni, Manzotti, Coppi, Mme Lanner, Wilhelm, Curti, Fokine, Massine, and, indeed, all the better ballets of more recent years : and such I venture to think the best will always be.

With this definition in view, I propose to pass lightly over the dawn of Ballet, or rather of its earliest elements, the Dance and Mime, and to deal more fully with the period, *after* the advent of Louis Quatorze, which first saw, both in France and in England, the real evolution of the *Ballet du Théâtre*.

## CHAPTER II

### EGYPT

SIX centuries before the Christian era the first plays of which scholarship has taken note were performed at Athens—those of Thespis, fore-runner of the first great dramatists of the world : Æschylus, Sophocles and Euripides ; and for convenience, the origin of Western drama may be dated from Thespis, because it seems first to have assumed then a definite form. That is not its actual origin, any more than the origin of any human being is to be dated from its birth ; as a possibility it may be said to have existed always. Even Chronology has its limitations, and preceding any given event there must have existed principles or tendencies.

The origin of the Drama is not a historic mystery however, because it is fairly clear as to what must have preceded it, and that the Drama derived its existence from the Poet in his capacity as Narrator.

For some hundreds of years the Drama has been chiefly a representation of character and events, whether real or fictitious. In its earliest forms it was mainly descriptive. It would seem to be the natural order of things that from pure description there should arise in time—possibly from a half-conscious feeling of the need of *emphasis*, of a desire to *impress* the hearers—an attempt to illustrate, or to represent, the scenes or actions described : the mere repetition of any story seems to tend towards that.

While in India and China, with their more ancient civilisation, the primitive origins of Drama might be more remotely placed, it is probable that in the Homeric bard and audience should be sought the true beginning of the Western theatre ; and that the evolution of the dramatic form has been much the same all the world over—namely, a gradual transition from bardic narration to imitative representation, primarily in the service of Religion.

When, however, we come to consider the origin of

the Dance, first and most important of the “four elements” of Ballet, we are led to the conclusion that, even though we are on less certain ground chronologically, it must nevertheless be yet older than the Drama. Why this should be so, even though we have no approximate date to go upon, as in the case of the Thespian theatre, it is not difficult to see.

The Drama evolved from, and has always depended on, the faculty of speech and the growth of language. A fairly copious vocabulary and flexibility of verbal expression are not characteristics of primitive races ; and, without both, the Drama, as we have known it for some centuries, could not have existed. But the Dance (with the mimetic art, which has been always intimately associated with it) has no need of words ; it is itself a natural form of speech, in which the whole body is used as a means of expression.

Just because it has a rhythmic basis, dancing, in some form, is among the primal instincts of mankind, even as it is of children. In all climes, at all periods, men and women have danced ; and its origin is lost in the mists of prehistoric years. Non-civilised races still existent may offer evidence as to stages in its evolution, but even among primitive races, dancing exhibits a certain definiteness of form, marking a heritage of long practice.

From uncouth leapings and gestures of savage or half-savage tribes, the effect perhaps of exuberant physical energy, may have grown the idea of thus expressing joy and thankfulness, for joy, not sorrow, one feels must surely have been always the first inspirer of the Dance ; and possibly victory over an enemy, or gratitude for a good harvest, would have come to be the originating inspiration—and afterwards the excuse for repetition—of such manifestations. Repetition of an act tends to create a habit, and what at first may be but a spontaneous expression of feeling grows by repetition into a cult with set form and ritual.

It is to be remembered also that, like rhythmic movement, mimetic gesture is among the earliest, most

primitive instincts of humanity, a point emphasised by Miss Irene Mawer in her book on *The Art of Mime*, in which she observes : " All art is the outcome of man's inherent instinct to reproduce impressions received from the world about him, or to find expression for the inexplicable emotions of fear, love, hate and ecstasy, which urge him forward to some unknown goal, through a world of vaguely understood phenomena . . . gesture and expressive movement are born from the natural instincts of humanity. The higher the intellect of a people or a race, the greater will be the perfection of the arts of mime, dance and drama. . . . "

The ritual of the Dance seems to be ancient as the stars, in representing the movement of which it is said to have had its origin in Egypt over two thousand years ago. Nowhere is it found without form. All must be done in a certain way, according to the traditions of the locality in which the Dance is seen, or according to some wider tradition. Always it has a ritual of its own ; but also with religious ritual the origin of the Dance, as also of the Drama, is found to be in some mysterious manner associated.

Of all records that we have of dancing, some of the earliest are those of Egypt. Its origin is not there ; it must be older ; but we know at least that the Egyptians were among the first people with a civilisation who encouraged dancing. The Egyptians had no Ballet of the theatre, because they had no theatre. They had dances which seem to have been *représentations ingénieuses*, and to that extent, as mimetic dances, partook of the nature of Ballet ; but they were not organised as theatrical spectacles for public entertainment.

The Egyptians did not reach the " theatre " stage ; but dancing, always essentially an art of the people, received encouragement as an element in religious festivals, and as an entertainment of the wealthy. Difference of opinion exists as to the religious dances of Egypt, and enthusiastic historians of dancing have been rather too prone to expand the little store of fact

we possess ; some have even spoken of the religious and popular "ballets" of the Egyptians. But Ballet is the dramatic form of the Dance in the theatre, and it is certain that they had no regular theatrical spectacles in which dancing was of main importance ; and their popular dances, to such extent as they could be called *représentations ingénieuses*, were primitive in comparison with those of Greece, Rome, or of more modern times. Solo dances and *pas de deux* were general enough, and the dancing of massed groups and the representation of a dramatic story were not unknown. The typical form of them, though not performed as a theatrical spectacle, seems to have been an "astronomical dance" done by, or under the direction of, the priests of Apis, to represent the movements of the stars, and probably employed as a form of initiation.

In mediæval times the Church took advantage of the popular craving for theatrical shows, and, by the aid of "mystery" plays, sought to extend the knowledge of religious truths. It may be presumed that the Egyptian hierarchy similarly had some such end in view, that the priestly caste sought to utilise the popular taste for dancing as a means of influence, and that the actual performance of the dance served to fix more lastingly in the minds of novices the religious and astronomical truths it symbolised.

In addition to the star-dance, the Egyptians had a "funeral" dance, the "Maneros," of which Herodotus speaks. The fact is, however, that information both as to the religious and ceremonial uses of dancing among the Egyptians is scanty, and what little record we have of their dancing is mainly on its popular side and to be gleaned from the monuments.

A fresco in the British Museum shows two girls performing before an audience of women, one of whom is applauding, or perhaps marking the time with syncopated clapping, as negroes do to-day. Another representation of dancing, on a fresco from Thebes, shows three figures, and the centre one is apparently performing an *entrechat* (the familiar ballet step in which

the dancer crosses feet in mid-air), while a fourth acts as orchestra with a couple of curved maces beaten together to mark the rhythm.

Yet other Egyptian monuments also show dancers, one, from Beni Hassan, depicting several couples, apparently boys, performing a dance which obviously had certain set steps and seems to have been used mainly as a rhythmic athletic exercise, as were many of the Greek dances ; and another monument shows men performing what appears to be a *pirouette*. In all of these drawings there is an air of decision, a suggestion of trained performance which, remembering that these monuments are some four thousand years old and depict steps familiar to us to-day, is in itself testimony to the antiquity of the art of dancing.

## CHAPTER III

### *GREECE : THE DANCE*

**T**HREE is ample evidence, literary and pictorial, as to the ancient Greek love of the Dance ; there are numerous references to dancing in Homer, Hesiod, Æschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Pindar and other of the classic poets and dramatists, and countless representations of the Dance are to be seen on vases in the museum at Athens, in our own British Museum, and elsewhere.

Among the arts of war and peace that were engraved upon the wondrous shield that Hephaestos fashioned for Achilles, the Dance was not forgotten ; and the Homeric singer must have been a lover of the art to present the picture given in the eighteenth book of the *Iliad*.

“ There, too, the skilful artist’s hand had wrought  
With curious workmanship, a mazy dance,  
Like that which Daedalus in Knossos erst  
At fair-haired Ariadne’s bidding framed.  
There, laying each on other’s wrists their hand,  
Bright youths and many-suited maidens danced.

Now whirled they round with nimble practised feet,  
Easy, as when a potter, seated, turns  
A wheel, new-fashioned by his skilful hand  
And spins it round, to prove if true it run :  
Now feately moved in well-beseeming ranks.  
A numerous crowd, around, the lovely dance  
Surveyed, delighted ; while an honoured Bard  
Sang, as he struck the lyre, and to the strain  
Two tumblers, in the midst, were whirling round.”

The “ two tumblers ” is an interesting detail, but it does not necessarily refer to the sort of “ acrobatic ” dance we know to-day. There have always been two phases of the Dance which are best understood by noting the distinction marked by the use of the two French words—*danser* and *sauter*. The former means to dance *terre-à-terre*, that is, always with the feet, or one

foot at least, on or close to the ground ; *sauter* invariably means to leap into the air, or to perform steps while both feet are in the air. We speak of a " somersault," a " double somersault " and so forth. The word is a corruption of the old French *soubresault*, from the Latin *supra*, over, and *saltus*, leap ; and early historians of the Dance frequently speak of " saltation," without any reference to the acrobatic somersault as we know it, but to what we should simply call—dancing.

The foregoing Homeric picture must, since it was first described, have been repeated innumerable times both in Greece and elsewhere, whenever and wherever there has been a gathering of men and maids on a village green, dancing in a circle, with a couple of high-leaping lads in the centre inciting all to quicken the rhythm of the whirling dance ; and many an Elizabethan village must certainly have realised such a scene.

Returning to Hellenic days we have another graceful picture of the Dance, in Theocritus' eighteenth Idyll, "The Bridal of Helen," which reads delightfully in Calverley's translation :

" Whilom in Lacedaemon tripped many a maiden fair,  
To gold-pressed Menelaus' halls with hyacinths in her hair,  
Twelve to the painted chamber, the queenliest in the land,  
The clustered loveliness of Greece came dancing hand-in-hand,  
With woven steps they beat the ground in unison, and sang  
The bridal hymn of triumph till all the Palace rang."

The Greek dance, it should be noted, was almost invariably accompanied by singing ; and the poet was often indebted to the Dance for the rhythm of his verse.

The bridal dance was of very ancient institution indeed, there were few occasions which were not celebrated with dancing. The Greeks even followed the Egyptian custom of having "dancers" at the funerals ; and the funeral dance of ancient days was really a mimetic ceremonial, in which the dancers represented the deeds and virtues of the dead.

To the ancient Greeks the Dance was a national cult, a vital element in the religious and physical well-being of the individual and the State ; and the dance

that was taught to the child became an important and lasting factor in the physical growth and mental culture of the man.

Some people to-day may wonder that it was so seriously considered by the Greeks, and more particularly by such philosophers as Plato, Aristotle and others ; but perhaps that is only because it has been too lightly considered by our earlier educationists who, only too often, have associated it too exclusively with theatrical display. There is, after all, a vast difference between the dance that was a means of physical and mental culture, pursued amid the health-giving surroundings of sunshine and fresh air, and, let us say, the "acrobatic" dance of modern times, performed in the glare of foot-lights, amid the smoke-laden atmosphere of a music-hall ; or, again, in the form of "crush" dancing seen in a crowded dance-club.

The contrast is an obvious one, but the thing to consider is, that we in England have allowed an art which held an important place in Greek national life, and which should also be of the greatest educational value to ourselves, to become mainly a spectacle of the theatre, where, often enough, it is seen at its best technically, *not* necessarily because it is the result of the best systems, but simply because it is the fruit of the greatest practice.

The Greeks have been said to have derived their earlier dances from Egypt. This is questionable, because there was always a traditional, indigenous dance in Greece ; but it was through the Greeks, certainly, that dancing first assumed that variety and perfection of form and style which all the arts seemed destined to attain under their quickening, purifying and inspiring influence. It was the Greeks, too, who first developed in a form appreciable by Western civilisation the art of mimetic dance, the evolution of which was natural enough, and must have been through much the same process in every country.

As, in her book on the history and technique of the *Art of Mime*, Miss Mawer truly says : " Among the

earliest mimetic dances which gradually separated themselves from those of a purely religious character, we find dances of love and of war, and others made from men's handicrafts, such as fishing, hunting, sowing and reaping. In the primitive history of every nation these occur, and from them, in greater or less degree of perfection, have grown the arts of Dance, Mime, and finally, from the rhythmic songs which accompanied them, Drama, in all its many significances."

With this quotation in view we should remember also that the Greek word for dancing, *orchesis*, implied much more than merely steps with the feet, for it included interpretive dancing, and mimetic gesture.

By the Greeks dancing was divisible into two main types, the one gymnastic, for the purpose of physical training, and, more particularly—as in Sparta—for military service ; the other, mimetic, employed in the service of religion and in the Drama ; and in both cases the Dance was usually accompanied by music. From earliest times dancing was closely associated, as was the Drama, with religion, and was a feature of all public festivals.

As regards religious ceremonial, the mimetic dance was used, as in the case of the Dionysia, for the representation of the life and deeds of the god about whose altar the dancers circled ; but, apart from religion, the mimetic dance entered largely into the Greek drama, and also into social life.

The general character of the Greek dance is well defined by the late A. E. Haigh in his valuable work on *The Attic Theatre*, in which he remarks : " In the ancient Greek drama, as in modern opera, the three sister arts of Music, Poetry and Dancing were all brought into requisition. But there was this difference—in the Greek drama the poetry was the principal feature of the performance, the music and the dance were subordinate. Moreover, dancing was seldom introduced by itself as a mere spectacle ; it was mainly used in connection with singing, to interpret and add vividness to the words of the song. The music, the

poetry and the dancing were blended together into one harmonious whole, each part gaining an advantage by its combination with the other two. Most, if not all of the choral songs were accompanied by dancers of one sort or another. To the Greek mind there was an inseparable connection between song and dance, and the notion of choral singing unaccompanied by dancing would have appeared strange and unusual. The two arts had grown up and developed simultaneously, as appears from the fact that many of the technical terms in metrical phraseology referred originally to the movements of the dance. For instance, the smallest division of a verse was called a 'foot.' A verse of two feet was styled a 'basis' or 'stepping.' The words 'arsis' and 'thesis,' which denoted the varying stress of the voice in singing, originally referred to the raising up and placing down of the foot in marching and dancing."

The mere word "dancing" meant something rather different, and much more, to the Greeks than it does to the average dancer of to-day, excluding of course those who have made, or are making, a special study of the revived Greek dance. To quote Haigh once more : "The word 'orchesis,' which we translate as 'dancing,' had in reality a much wider meaning. Greek dancing originated, according to Plato, in the instinctive tendency of mankind to accompany speech and song with explanatory movements of the body. It was essentially a mimetic performance. It included, not only all such motions as are denoted by dancing in the modern sense of the word, but also every kind of gesture and posture by which various objects and events can be represented in dumb show. Its principal function was to interpret and illustrate the words of poetry. . . . The art was carried by the Greeks to the highest perfection, and a good dancer was able to accompany a song with such expressive pantomime as to create a visible picture of the things described."

The earliest dramatic poets, Thespis and Phrynicus, were called "dancers" because, in addition to pro-

viding the drama as poets, their function was to train their choruses in the dances which, accompanied by singing, were introduced in the play. Athenæus is authority for the story that Telestes, the famous dancer who played under the direction of Æschylus, was able most skilfully to "depict events with his hands." This, which was really miming, was considered as a necessary part of dancing, which Aristotle defined as "the representation of actions, characters and passions by means of postures and rhythmic movements."

Plutarch, in his *Symposiaca*, analyses dancing as "Motions, Postures and Indications," a "posture" being the attitude of the dancer at the moment of arrested movement, and an "indication" the gesture which indicated an external object referred to in a poet's lines, such as the sky ; or such as an orator would use when raising his hand heavenward invoking the gods.

The chief dances used in the Greek drama were the *Emmeleia*, a stately measure ; *Hyporchemata*, lively dances ; the *Kordax*, a coarse and comic dance ; and finally the *Sikinnis*, which was attached especially to satyric comedies and as a rule parodied the measure of the *Emmeleia*. These were all a part, though a subordinate part, of the classic drama, and had their foundation in the rhythm of the poet's verse as it was sung by the chorus or declaimed by the chief actors.

Apart from these, there were purely representational or mimetic dances. One, in which we may perhaps even see a hint of the origin of dancing itself, is found in Longus' novel, *Daphnis and Chloe*, in which Dryas performs a vintage-dance, "pretending to gather grapes, to carry them in panniers, to tread them in a vat and pour the flowing juice into jars and then to drink of the wine thus newly made" ; and all done so cleverly that the spectators were deceived for the time and thought they really saw the grapes, the vats and the wine the actor made pretence of drinking. This, probably an incident from life, was indeed a *représentation ingénueuse*, and even suggests yet another of the many possibilities

as to the origin of the Dance, namely—that dancing itself may have originated from the treading of grapes.

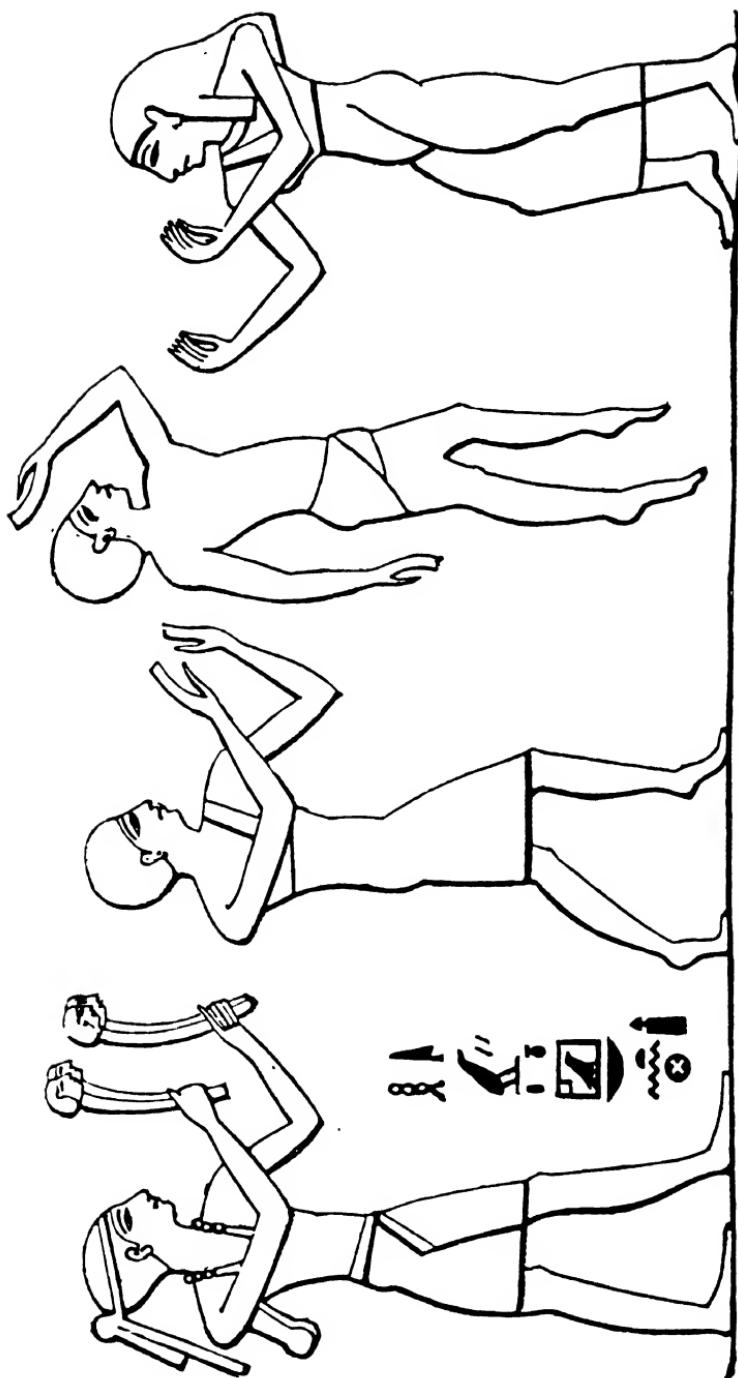
The famous Pyrrhic dance was of course mimetic and represented a series of war-like incidents, all of which had an educational purpose, as by their means the *youthful soldier was taught how to advance and retreat, how to aim a blow or hurl a javelin, and to dodge them ; and how to leap and vault, in event of meeting ditches and walls.* Apart from military dances, in which physical culture and dexterity were the chief aims, there were many dances of a purely festal character taken part in by young men and girls, and by girls alone.

The close association between religion and the Dance in ancient Hellenic days is seen in the number of festivals in honour of the gods, at which special dances were performed, apart from those which formed part of the classic drama and others which were merely local folk-dances, performed by way of pastime.

Certain dances were performed annually in honour of Zeus ; then there were the dances in honour of Apollo, the Ionic, the Pœonian, and the Kalabis ; and the famous Dance of Innocence, instituted by Lycurgus, and executed to the glory of Artemis by Lacedæmonian girls before the altar of the goddess. The Delian Dance, special to the isle of Delos, was much the same in character and closed with the offering of floral garlands on the altar of Aphrodite. One of the most solemn incidents of the Eleusinian mysteries was the mystical dance-drama representing the search of Demeter for her daughter Persephone—practically a “Ballet” in the older acceptance of the word.

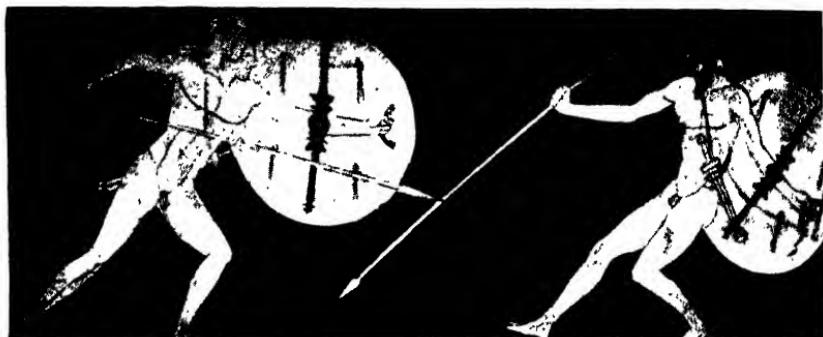
The secular dance of the Greeks was largely individualistic ; men and women rarely danced together, and when they did, the joining of hands was exceptional. One of these exceptions was the *Hormos* or Collar-dance, as it was called, which Lucian describes as being danced by youths and maidens advancing one by one in the form of a collar, made up of the alternating jewels of feminine grace and manly strength, the dance being led by a youth. Most of the Greek

THE DANCE OF ANCIENT EGYPT





A DANCE OF GREEK MAIDENS TO THE ACCOMPANIMENT OF A FLUTE, AND A DANCE OF SATYRS  
From a vase in the British Museum.



THE PYRRHIC DANCE  
As shown on a Greek vase.

dances had a leader, and the favour in which the art was held is shown by the fact that they termed their Chief Magistrate *Pro-orchestris*, or Leader of the Dance.

In another sense also the Hellenic dance was individualistic. In modern theatrical ballet, more especially during the latter half of last century, it has been customary to see entire groups, eight, sixteen or even thirty-two or more dancers, all performing the same step simultaneously, for all the world like military evolutions. It is one of the conventions of a certain type of Ballet, like the chorus in "musical comedy" or revues. The Greeks had not that convention.

Although their dance was strictly rhythmic and was governed by rules, they ruled the dance of the individual, rather than of drilled groups, as seen, for instance, in the more conventional operatic ballet of a century ago. The dancer was judged by the grace of line displayed and rhythmic balance of movement; and many a vase painting exhibits groups of dancers who, though dancing in the mass, are each doing different steps; and equally the gestures and mimetic expression of each differed to some extent.

The system had its advantages, for, while the rhythm of the song or poetic verse which accompanied the performers was the common basis of the dance for all, the individuality of expression gave a vitality to the group which accounts for the vividness and charm of their representation on many an antique vase.

It is impossible to devote to the Hellenic dance more than a chapter in a volume designed to trace, not the evolution of dancing, but of the Dance in its relation to the theatre, and interested readers would do well to turn to M. Maurice Emmanuel's scholarly work, *La Danse Grecque*, which is still valuable from many points of view, though now superseded for practical purposes by the technical and artistic value of *The Revived Greek Dance ; Its History and Technique*, by Ruby Ginner, to whose important contribution towards a Hellenic renaissance it will be necessary to refer more fully in a later chapter.

Meanwhile perhaps one may be permitted an apposite quotation from her opening chapter on the "Minoan and Achæan Ages," in which she remarks : "The dance was connected closely with every element of Greek life, and was practised universally throughout the country. Its evolution coincides with the development of the race." And again, when speaking of the artistic development of the Greeks in the great age of Pericles, she so beautifully says : "Athens found the expression of her soul through art. Immortal buildings and sculptures rose on every hand, and again the dance sought her home among the shining pillars of the temples and in the sweeping circles of marble theatres. The rock of the Acropolis was made fairer by the dance of lovely feet, and its heights echoed with the drama of immortal poets. And not only in Athens did the arts shine forth but throughout all Hellas ; the spirit of joy and beauty fled across the plains and over the mountains, and everywhere her going was marked by the gleaming of temples and theatres in the sun, among which the men and women of Greece danced the loveliness of heaven, the beauty of sorrow and the joy of life. . . . For only a century the art kept its purity and beauty, then, through pride and self-seeking, the Greek lost his faith and his ideal . . . the ideal of self-restraint gave place to self-indulgence, the dithyramb and the parthenion changed to vulgar song. The athlete cultivated only the strength of the brute, the dancer the vulgarity of love of applause and the parading of the body. Through loss of faith and self-respect the arts fell from their high estate, and all Greece might say, as Pindar sang of Delphi, that it was 'forlorn of the dance-step of the men,' "

That fall of the arts in ancient Greece—to be still further degraded in decadent Rome—is an historical warning not inappropriate to our day ; and politicians and social reformers, as well as artists and educationists, might do well not only to heed that and other such warnings from the past, but also to question whether our social, intellectual and artistic life might not find

re-birth in re-studying, as R. L. Stevenson once urged, "earlier and fresher models," while reminding ourselves also, that "where there is no vision, the people perish."

That it was this loss of "vision," as well as the attacks of more material, foreign enemies, that brought about the decay first of Greece and, later, of Rome, history shows ; but Greece at least left records enough of the vision that she had, to re-inspire the minds and refresh the hearts of men with beauty, over and over again, since her material prosperity declined ; and, while many have studied her literature and her arts, comparatively few seem to have realised the wealth of her legacy as regards the Dance, evidenced by statuary and vase paintings, a wealth revealed once more by Miss Ginner's close and artistically sympathetic study of Greek life. Numerous indeed were the various forms of the Hellenic dance, sacred, dramatic, secular ; but further description here would detain us too long *en route* towards the culmination of all these earlier types of mimetic and other dances in modern times, and we next must trace the growth of the Latin Mime and Pantomime.

## CHAPTER IV

### ROME: MIME AND PANTOMIME

**I**F Ballet owes much to Greece for the encouragement of the Dance, it is even more indebted to Rome for the development of the art of Pantomime.

By many the word "Pantomime" is associated solely with that time-honoured entertainment which children, home for the Christmas holidays, are nowadays supposed to be too *blasé* to care for, but to which they go by way of obliging parents who feel it their duty to take them.

The Christmas pantomime has long been one of our cherished institutions, but, like the British Constitution, it has survived by modification. It is still given at Christmas ; that much of tradition remains ; but most of its original features have all but disappeared. Time was, two hundred years ago, when it was mainly "Harlequinade," and Harlequin and his gay comrades of the Italian comedy were the heroes of the play. Then classical plots and allusions, with elaboration of scenic effect and "machines," brought about a gradual change. In the early nineteenth century a topical and patriotic element developed, but the Harlequinade, although shortened and, let us add, *broadened*, still remained.

A craze for "transformation" scenes now followed because the gorgeousness of the tinsel productions of Macready and Kean—the archæological and historic accuracy of which were always emphasised—forced pantomime producers in self-defence to go one better in spectacular display.

Then came Grimaldi to give a new life to the whimsies of that clown whose prototype dates back to ancient Rome ; and for half a century or more the Christmas pantomime continued much the same—a familiar nursery-story played out to the accompaniment of fairy-like and glittering scenic accessories, concluding with a rough-and-tumble, and much diminished, "Harlequinade."

Not of such fashion, however, was the antique

pantomime, which, evolving from the earlier spoken “Mimes,” became, because it took all nature for its province, *panto-mime*—the dramatic representation, without a spoken word, of all that eye could see or mind of man conceive.

Now, it is a far step from narrative to impersonation—one marking considerable advance in the technique of acting ; and it was some time before the Greek Drama had achieved this. But it was not the impressive side of the Greek Drama that taught the actors, not merely to *declaim* situations, but to *act* them ; it was, rather, the freer, popular and comic side ; and was probably the Doric farce and, later, the early Latin comedy derived therefrom, that really brought to perfection under the Roman Empire the art of Mime, apart from that of Dancing.

The comic is so much nearer to life as we see it every day than the tragic ; and it was this ability to see and reproduce the more familiar, humorous side of life and desire to travesty the serious that first gave flexibility and variety to the art of miming, or “acting” as we call it nowadays.

Following upon public encouragement would come the endeavour of leading actors to outshine each other in technical *tour de forces* : and from playing the familiar types of Latin comedy, such as “Maccus,” with his double hump, prototype of our Punch ; “Pappus,” forerunner of Pantaloons, and other characters (some from the early *Mimi*, some from the *Atellanæ* and *Togatae* of tradition), the Latin actors of the first and second centuries A.D. ultimately aspired to the wordless representation of the gods and heroes of poetic myth and legend.

According to one historian of the period, “the Latin Pantomime grew out of the custom at this period—the first century of the Christian era—of having lyrical solos, such as interludes to flute accompaniment, between the acts of the Latin comedies.” According to another, M. Charles Hastings, “this new mode (Pantomime) was a kind of Mime, in which poses and gestures constituted the fundamental portion of the play. Words

occupied a secondary place, and *eventually disappeared altogether*. Only the music was preserved, and in order that the audience might understand the gestures of the actors, little books were distributed in Greek text, intelligible only to the learned and to the upper classes. Later on the mask—rejected by the Mime—was adopted, and a chorus was employed to accompany the comedian with their voices, and to explain the multiple gestures by which the actors created the different characters in turn. Moreover, there was a company of mute players. The libretti left almost unlimited liberty of detail. Sometimes the music broke off to enable the actor to finish his *fioritura* and variations. Sometimes, on the other hand, the comedian paused, or left the stage, while the story was taken up by the recitative and the instruments.”

All this reads much like a description of a modern *mimodrame*, or of a modern ballet, and with these have we not often had printed synopses distributed? But it is to be remembered that the music was primitive, the scenic effect very different from that of our modern stage, with its greater mechanical resources; and finally, that all this was an innovation of the Roman stage, for we are talking of the period that saw the dawn of the Christian era.

Among the more famous of the Latin pantomimists were Pylades, the inventor of tragic pantomimes; and Bathyllus, the composer of comedy episodes. For some time they joined forces and had a theatre of their own, where they staged comedies and tragedies composed by themselves and acted without words, or any other aid, in telling the story of the play, than dancing, pantomime and music.

The innovation struck the popular fancy, and all Rome flocked to support the novel venture. The two actors were received by the Emperor and became the idols of the Roman “smart” set, until they began to intrigue at Court, were made the centre of intrigue, and became as jealous of each other as rival opera-singers; so in time a financially happy partnership

was dissolved, and two theatres became devoted to the art of pantomime instead of one.

As this form of drama was a novelty, however, and pleased the numerous connoisseurs, both theatres were equally successful, perhaps the more so in that the public are always specially interested in ventures that appear to be in rivalry. The taste for existing stage-productions slackened in favour of those offered by Pylades and Bathyllus. Their "ballets," whether tragic, comic or satiric, were looked on as the very perfection of tragedy, comedy or satire.

It was no longer a matter of declamatory style to enjoy or to criticise. It was the technique of steps, movements, gestures, attitudes, figures or positions, that were discussed by connoisseurs of the new thing who, in Rome—as elsewhere to-day—had much to say on what they freely praised, because it was new ; and such was the genius of the producers of this new type of entertainment, the effect was so natural, the stage-pictures convincing, the pathos so moving or gaiety so free and infectious, that audiences forgot they had ears in using enchanted eyes ; and expressive gesture took the place of vocal inflection, of the power of words, the music of poetic verse.

Pylades soon found a rival star arise in the person of Hylas, whose greatest performance was said to be in "*Oedipus*." If Pylades and Bathyllus had quarrelled there was evidently no love lost between Pylades and Hylas.

On one occasion, Hylas was giving a representation of Agamemnon, and, at a particular line referring to that historic personage as "the great," he rose up on tip-toe. "That," said Pylades scornfully, "is being tall, *not* 'great'" ; a criticism not only just, but giving an excellent insight into the mimetic methods and ideas of the famous Latin pantomimist.

It is somewhat uncertain whether it was the Court intrigues of Bathyllus or of Hylas, or of both, that ultimately secured from the Emperor the sentence of banishment for Pylades, or whether it was the daring,

not to say impudence, of the actor in representing well-known people ; or whether, again, it may not have been the increasing danger of the serious brawls taking place daily in the streets of Rome between the rival factions —the Pyladians and the Bathyllians. But whatsoever the reason, this perpetual strife between the parties supporting the adored actors, and the constant blood-shed involved, was made the excuse for the convenient removal of one of the chief factors in the disorder, Pylades, who presently had his revenge, for, such was the uproar in Rome on his banishment, that the Emperor was practically forced to recall him, and eventually he returned in triumph.

But it is time to leave the affairs of popular actors of the ancient world, for the details of their personal history are of less importance than their influence as the virtual inventors of the second element of Ballet, the art of Mime. From the dawn of the Christian era, Comedy gave place to a perfect craze for Pantomime. But, finally, the mimetic art as a standing entertainment of the Roman public came to suffer neglect in favour of circuses ; then, together with the circuses, it was opposed by the Churches. There were spasmodic revivals, but, from the fifth century onwards, Mime and Pantomime practically ceased to exist in Constantinople, to which the seat of the Roman Empire had by that time been removed ; and the arts, both of the dancer and the mime, fell upon obscurity in the period we term the Dark Ages.

## CHAPTER V

### *THE MIDDLE AGES*

**H**IStory has often shown that undue opposition to the pleasures of a people only increases desire for them, and that the pressure of too rigorous laws, or of a too rigid majority, merely stimulates the invention of evasions.

In England during the seventeenth century the forces of Puritan prejudice and of law did not crush the Drama, but, if anything, tended to provoke unseemly license.

When, in eighteenth-century Paris, the Royal Opera jealously tried to kill, by royal decree, the livelier theatres of the Fairs, forbidding them to present musical plays in which words were sung on the stage, were the managers of the little theatres downhearted? No; they simply mocked such pompous interference by performing only the music of the songs, the meaning of which was dumbly mimed, while the words, printed large, were shown on a screen let down on to the stage! The audience, enjoying the fun of the evasion, sang the songs themselves, and supported the performance the more.

Experiments in suppression of popular entertainment had similarly failed some sixteen centuries earlier, even before the growing power of the new Christian Church had begun to be a calculable factor in practical politics.

That dancing had been popular in ancient Rome, as one of the pleasures of the people, is seen in the fact that, in the first century of the Christian era, during the reign of Augustus, there were something like three thousand foreign dancers in the city. In the following reign, owing to rioting of rival factions supporting rival stars, and to undue favour shown them by some of his Senators, the Emperor Tiberius banished dancers and players from Italy; but not all the emperors were antagonistic to the stage, and Caracalla even appointed a noted pantomimist to an important military command.

The difficulties of successive Roman emperors in trying to rule an unwieldy and decaying empire were

not diminished by increasing opposition between the austerer ideals of the new Church and the pleasures of the Roman populace, pleasures which more than one pagan moralist had denounced as being unworthy of Roman citizens. It was not dancing as a form of exercise or as an art of beauty that was attacked, but only its degradation as displayed by vicious exponents ; and the real weakness was that, instead of the Dance being, as it had been with the Greeks and the earlier Romans, a regular element in national education, practised for its value in co-ordinating mind and body, it had, with the decadence of Rome, become merely the expression of a lascivious professionalism.

With the transference of the Imperial capital from Rome to Byzantium (Constantinople) in the fourth century, the arts of dancer and of mime did not die ; far from it, for the citizens of the newer capital, very cosmopolitan and largely Greek, were avid of entertainment. Though Constantine was no dancer, his successor, Julian, evidently was, for did not Gregory Nazianzen implore him to be more discreet, saying in effect : “ If you *must* dance, and if you must take part in these fêtes, for which you seem to have such a passion, then dance, if you must ; but *why* revive the dissolute dances of the daughter of Herodias, and of the pagans ? Dance rather as King David did before the Ark ; dance to the glory of God. Such exercises of peace and of piety are worthy of an Emperor and a Christian.”

No fault was found with the healthy exercise of the Dance in itself, but with only such dance, and other Byzantine entertainment, as had become merely an exhibition of depraved taste. Indeed, even Gregory could hardly exclaim against dancing as a secular entertainment when it had been recorded in the Bible itself : “ And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand ; and all the women went out after her with timbrels *and with dances*. ” Had not the servants of Achish said : “ Is not this David the king of the land ? did not they *sing one to another of him in dances*, saying, Saul hath slain his

thousands, and David his ten thousands"? Had it not, too, been written: "And David danced before the Lord with all his might"?

By the fifth century of the Christian era, however, there was little of the religious element about dancing or other public entertainment, and the Byzantine populace were just show-crazy. Even in our days it is doubtful if any film-fan worships the latest cinema-star more than did the Byzantine populace a successful gladiator, circus-rider, player or dancer; and as for that whilom Press "sensation" of the romantic Victorian days, to wit, the marriage of some titled youth with a star of the theatrical firmament, it was already forestalled by the more impressive wedding of a Byzantine emperor, Justinian, with Theodora, once a somewhat notorious dancer at the Hippodrome.

An indirect result of the union was that the Emperor curbed some of his subjects' excessive opportunities for licentious shows by annulling the laws under which the expense of performances in the Hippodrome had been met by the Imperial purse, a decision mainly due to his beautiful wife, who had seen all the worst side of theatrical life in a period when the older Greek and Latin culture had given place to debased and degrading forms of entertainment.

It is not to be supposed that the Dance as an art which had been the delight of the Greeks, or its sister-art of Mime, which had been that of Rome, died with the decay of the Empire, any more than did other forms of popular entertainment. Their chief enemies were those of Rome herself, namely, the barbarian hordes, who at various times over-ran the more civilised quarters of Europe, sacking cities and laying waste with fire and sword the villages, fields and vineyards of Italy, Spain and France. But though the theatres fell, the arts thereof survived.

In his monumental work on *The Mediæval Stage*, E. K. Chambers mentions Sidonius Appolinaris—who became Bishop of Clermont in 472—as having, in earlier years, written a poem in which he "describes

the *spectacula theatri* of mimes, pantomimes and acrobats as still flourishing at Narbonne"; that is, in the fifth century. He also suggests, very truly, that "a greater menace to the continuance of the theatre lay in the taste of the Barbarians than even in the ethics of Christianity"; and, in his erudite chapter on "Mimus and Scop," he remarks: "The fall of the theatre by no means implied the complete extinction of the *scenici*. They had outlived tragedy and comedy; they were destined to outlive the stage itself. Private performance, especially of *pantomimi* and other dancers, had enjoyed great popularity under the Empire, and had become an invariable adjunct of all banquets and other festivities. . . . Driven from their theatres, they still had a vogue, not only at banquets, but at popular merry-makings or wherever in street or country they could gather together the remnant of their old audiences. . . . They were, in fact, absorbed into that vast body of nomad entertainers on whom so much of the gaiety of the Middle Ages depended."

Some forms of public entertainment popular throughout the Middle Ages were survivals of an earlier age, and can still be seen on the stage to-day. Acrobatic tumblers, tight-rope walkers and dancers (*danseurs du corde*), jugglers and conjurers, for instance, had been popular forms of amusement in Imperial Rome. So, too, were they to be seen in feudal castle, and in public squares or at street-corners, in twelfth-century France, when *trouvères* and *troubadours* wandered from court to court, from village to village, with their attendant *jougleurs*, or *jongleurs*, or *menestrels*, wide terms that signified a variety of talents, for they could not only recite or sing their master's poems, or take part in a *tenson* or dialogue, but could as easily play on various instruments as well as dance and mime, tumble or conjure, and do sundry other tricks for the delight of courtly or peasant patrons.

Apart from such professional and peripatetic entertainers, it should be remembered that throughout these earlier Dark, or Middle Ages, dancing itself was always

to be found in every country, in the form of traditional "folk," or national, dances indigenous to the soil ; and, moreover, that dancing was a regular feature of most of the Church festival days, especially in Italy, France and England. The Dance may have languished during those Dark, or early Middle, Ages ; but it certainly did not die.

What the dances of that lengthy period were—roughly, from the dawn of the Christian era to the fourteenth century—we do not know, or less surely at any rate than we do those of ancient Greece, simply from lack of those pictorial representations in which the Hellenic period of the Dance was so rich. Indeed, it is not really until the fifteenth century that we begin to find reliable records of the actual dances then in vogue, or any considerable testimony as to the popularity of dancing save in the form of ecclesiastical permission, or proscription.

That dancing had been customary in churchyards on the occasion of Church festivals is seen, for instance, in the fact that a Council of 682 forbade it. That it was only attacked when seen in degraded form, or was the occasion of riotous behaviour, is evidenced again by the Bull which the Pope Zacharias promulgated in 744, suppressing all *baladoires*, or so-called "religious" dances, because they were becoming degenerate. These were dances performed in, or within the precincts of, cathedrals and churches at such times as Easter, Midsummer and Christmas.

The old English bonfire dances on St. John's Eve were probably pagan survivals, similar to the ancient Roman festival of the *Palilia*, in honour of Pales, when piles of straw were burnt while the celebrants leaped over or danced through them. Similarly, too, the French *dances des Brandons*, or torch-dances, that took place on the first Sunday in Lent round flaming bonfires, were kept up in France from earliest times ; as was also the *danse de St. Jean*, celebrated on the 24th of June, sustained for centuries in Brittany.

It is not until the sixteenth century that we begin to

find anything like reliable records of dances actually then in vogue ; and, that dancing was then sanctioned by the Church, or by custom, is seen in the fact that, quite late in the sixteenth century, we find Thoinot-Arbeau, a canon of the Church, remarking in his enchanting volume, entitled “*Orchésographie*”—to which full consideration must be given later—“*En l'église primitive, la coutoume, continuée jusqu'en nostre temps, a été de chanter les hymnes de nostre église en dansant et ballant, et y est encore en plusieurs lieux observée*” ; proof enough that dancing was a popular pastime permitted to take place in the precincts of churches, where also were performed the early miracle and mystery-plays.

In the earlier *chansons à danser*, the *rondes*, *pastourelles* and *virelais* of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, we find many a reference to dancing, as when Adam la Halle, a thirteenth-century troubadour of Arras, in his *pastourelle* of “*Robin et Marion*,” ends their love-story with a dance of peasants. Then, too, in the famous *Roman de la Rose*—a fine subject for a mediæval ballet—we have the story of how the poet-author is led in a dream to a fair field beside a river, where he comes to a beautiful garden enclosed in high walls, on which were painted, in gold and blue, figures representing Hate, Felony, Avarice, Covetousness, Envy, Sorrow and Age ; and how the gate of the garden was opened to him by *Oyseuse*, or *Idleness*, who was the door-keeper, and conducted him to the master of the garden, named “*Deduit*,” who, in his beauty, resembled an angel, as did all who were with him, a charming group who danced to songs sung by a lady named “*Liesse*,” or “*Jollity*.”

Into the poet’s adventures we need not go further here, the point of real interest being that in this account of his symbolic dream he was giving a picture of a custom of the time, namely, dancing to song, as men and maids had danced in the days of ancient Greece. It was a regular and traditional custom in many localities in France for centuries ; and it is not impossible that it may have even been indirectly derived from the



A FORT H. DANCE OF 1463.  
Performed at the Court of Burgundy.



DANCERS OF THE 15TH CENTURY

Accompanied by pipe and tabor.

classic days of Greece through Marseilles, which, during the Roman occupation, had been "Massilia," and, in pre-Christian days, had long been a large and important Greek settlement.

Among other notable references to dancing in mediæval literature we find in *Piers Plowman* the remark : "I can neither saylen ne saute," the latter word being, of course, from the French, *sauter*, to leap, or dance. Then, too, Chaucer speaks of dancers as "tumblestères or saylors" (derived from the Latin, *salio*) and again, in his *Franklyn's Tale*, he tells how : "After dinner gan they to daunce, and singe also."

This after-dinner dancing was a customary feature of social life throughout the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, the dancing being sometimes performed by professional entertainers, and sometimes taking the form of a *mascarade*, forerunner of our English "Masque," in which often both Royal hosts and guests participated, one of the historical examples of which is that (mentioned by Froissart, and contemporaneously spoken of as the *ballet des ardents*) which had tragic result.

It was on the 29th January, 1393, when a *charivari*, or *mascarade*, was given in the Hotel Royal de St. Paul, in honour of the wedding of one of the ladies-in-waiting of Isabel of Bavaria ; and the King himself, with four of the leading gentlemen of his court, took part, dressed as "wild men of the woods," the costumes consisting mainly of tow and feathers, and no one being quite sure as to their identity. Unhappily the Duc d'Orleans, anxious to find out who they were, approached too near the dancers and set one of them alight, from whom the others caught fire, with the ghastly result that the poor men burned like living torches for, as Froissart says, "nearly an hour," the King only being saved from actual death by his aunt, the Duchesse du Berri, hastily smothering the flames with her train. But the shock of the occasion was too much for his somewhat nervous constitution, and he became insane.

To turn to happier themes, however, it is interesting

to note that much of the general love of public entertainment which developed in the following century was largely due to Church influence.

In the early days of the Byzantine Empire the Church's thunder had been launched at the grosser theatrical spectacles, and the theatre had retaliated by mocking the adherents of the then new religion. Where fulmination failed, control by influence was gradually essayed ; but, for all the attacks of the severer leaders of the early Church, there must, for at least some centuries of the Christian era, have been some confusion in the mind of the populace as to how they stood in the matter of lawful entertainment. Indeed, in the endeavour of the Church to transmute the popular love of theatrical spectacle into something higher, and to evoke public interest in the service of the Church by the introduction of choral song and of picturesque processional, even of ceremonial dances performed in the choir, the Church itself must, throughout the Dark Ages, have come at times to seem curiously sympathetic towards the very thing it was at other times impelled to condemn.

It may seem a far cry from the date of Pope Zacharias' edict of 744, to 1462, when the first of the *ballets ambulatoires* is recorded, but as we have seen, the arts of Dancer and of Player, though pursued in comparative obscurity, did not die, and were not lacking in history during those seven hundred odd years. Thus, in a chapter dealing more especially with early influences on the evolution of Ballet, it will be convenient to deal now with a form of entertainment, or of religious festival, which was essentially a creation of the Church.

The famous procession of the *Fête-Dieu* which King René d'Anjou, Count of Provence, established at Aix in 1462, was, as an old historian tells us, an "ambulatory" ballet, "composed of a number of allegorical scenes, called *entremets*. This word, which we replaced by "interludes," designated a miming spectacle, in which men and animals represented the action. Sometimes jugglers and mountebanks showed their tricks, and danced to the sound of their instruments. These enter-

tainments were called *entremets* because they were instituted to occupy the guests agreeably at a great feast, during the intervals between the courses. "The entre-actes of our first tragedies," the writer adds, "were arranged in this manner, as one sees in the works of Baif, the interludes in the tragedy of *Sophonisbie*. More than five hundred mountebanks, Merry Andrews, comedians and buffoons, exhibited their tricks and prowess at the full Court which was held at Rimini to arm the knights and nobles of the house of Malatesta and others."

The fêtes and tournaments, given on these occasions, were accompanied by acts of devotion; but these festivals of the Church often displayed also something of the gallant pomp of the tournaments.

The *ballets ambulatoires*, with all their pageantry, were yet to be outshone, however, by two famous secular entertainments of the Renaissance, to which we must devote our next chapter, namely, the banquet-dance of Bergonzi di Botta, of 1489, and the still more famous *Ballet Comique de la Reine*, of 1581, the last of which, there can be little doubt, had important effect on the development of our English Masque, which, in turn, had an immense influence on the evolution of modern Ballet.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE RENAISSANCE

THE dinner-ballet arranged by Bergonzio di Botta, a gentleman of Tortona, in honour of the wedding of Galeazzo, Duke of Milan, with Isabella of Aragon in 1489, was both ingenious and magnificent.

Bergonzio was a true lover of dining and of dancing. That historic *gourmet*, Brillat Savarin, commends him for his taste in the former matter ; as may we for the bright idea of combining a dinner with a dance, one of somewhat nobler plan than any of modern days.

The dinner was of many courses and each was introduced by the servers and waiters with a dance in character, the whole constituting a sort of dinner-ballet. In the centre of a stately *salon*, which was surrounded by a gallery where various musicians were distributed, there was a large table.

As the Duke and his lady entered the *salon* by one door, Jason and the Argonauts approached from another. Stepping proudly forth to the sound of martial music, they expressed in dance and mime their admiration of so handsome a bride and bridegroom, and covered the table with the Golden Fleece which they were carrying.

Then entered Mercury who, in recitative, described the cunning which he had used in stealing from Apollo, who guarded the flocks of Admetus, a fine fat calf, with which he came to pay homage to the newly married pair. While he placed it on the table, three "quadrilles" who followed him executed a graceful *entrée*.

Diana and her nymphs then succeeded Mercury, the Goddess being followed by a kind of litter on which was a hart. This, she explained, was Actæon, who, although no longer alive, was happy in that he was to be offered to so amiable and fair a nymph as Isabella of Aragon. At this moment a melodious symphony attracted the attention of the guests. It announced the singer of Thrace, who was seen playing on his lyre while chanting the praises of the young Duchess.

"I mourned," he sang, "on Mount Appenine, the death of tender Eurydice. Now, hearing of the union of two lovers worthy to live for one another, I have, for the first time since my sorrow, felt an impulse of joy. My songs have changed with the feelings of my heart. A flock of birds has flown to hear my song. I offer them to the fairest Princess on earth, since the charming Eurydice is no more."

A sudden clamour interrupted his song as Atalanta and Theseus, heading a spirited and brilliant troupe, represented by lively dances the glories of the chase. The mimic hunt was terminated by the death of the wild boar of Calydon, which was then offered to the young Duke, with triumphal "ballets."

A magnificent spectacle then succeeded this picturesque entrance. On one side was Iris, seated on a car drawn by peacocks and followed by several nymphs, covered in light gauze and carrying dishes of superb birds. The youthful Hebe appeared on the other side, carrying nectar which she poured out for the gods. She was accompanied by Arcadian shepherds laden with every variety of food by Vertumna and Pomona who themselves offered all manner of fruits. At the same time the shade of that famous *gourmet*, Apicius, rose from the earth, presenting to this superb feast all the delicacies he had invented, and which had won him the reputation of being the most voluptuous among ancient Romans. This spectacle disappeared, and then followed a wondrous ballet of all the gods of the sea and rivers of Lombardy, who carried the most exquisite fish and served them while executing characteristic dances.

This extraordinary repast was followed by a yet more singular spectacle opened by Orpheus, who headed a procession of Hymen and a troop of Loves, followed by the Graces who surrounded Conjugal Faith, whom they presented to the Princess while themselves offering to serve her.

At this moment, Semiramis, Helen, Medea and Cleopatra interrupted a recitative by Conjugal Faith to

sing of the delights of Passion. Then a Vestal, indignant that the celebration of a pure and noble marriage should be sullied by doubtful songs, ordered the notorious queens to withdraw. At her voice, the Loves who accompanied her joined in a lively dance, pursuing the wicked queens with lighted torches, and setting fire to the gauze veils of their head-dress ! Lucretia, Penelope, Thomiris, Porcia and Sulpicia then replaced them and presented to the young Princess that palm for chastity which they had merited during their lives. Their "modest and noble" dance, however, was interrupted by Bacchus, with a troop of revellers who came to celebrate the illustrious bridal, and the festival terminated in a somewhat less formal manner.

The fête achieved prodigious fame throughout Italy, was the talk of every city, and the "society hostesses" of the period endeavoured to imitate the ingenuity of its originators. The vogue of the dinner-ballet had "arrived."

One effect of its fame was to set the fashion for the Royal and Ducal Courts throughout Europe for a century. Every Court had its "ballets," in which lords and ladies of high degree took part ; and the fashion was fostered by Catherine de Medici, who sought to divert the attention of her son, Henry III, from political affairs towards the more congenial ways of social amusement, of which Court-ballets now came to form considerable part.

The culmination of these sumptuous entertainments was in 1581, when in celebration of the betrothal of the Duc de Joyeuse and Marguerite of Lorraine, sister of the Queen of France, a spectacle was arranged the splendour of which had never been seen in the world before. This was Beaujoyeux's famous *Ballet Comique de la Royne*—or *de la Reine* in modern spelling—which set all cultured Europe ringing with praise of its designer. A special account of it, with many charming engravings, was printed by order of the King to send to foreign Courts. So much did it set a fashion that the elaborate masked balls and the numerous Court-masques and

entertainments which followed in the reigns of Elizabeth and James were directly inspired by the success of Beaujoyeux's "ballet," even as they, in turn, influenced the subsequent productions of Louis XIV in France.

The author and designer of the *Ballet Comique* was an Italian, by name Baltasarini, noted as a violinist. He was introduced by the Duc de Brissac to the notice of Catherine de Medici, who appointed him a *valet de chambre*: and, subsequently, he became official organiser of the Court fêtes, ballets and concerts, assuming the name of Baltasir de Beaujoyeux.

The printed account of the ballet was sumptuously produced by the famous Royal printers, Ballard, 1582.

After a courtly dedication "Au Roy de France, et de Pologne," full of praise for his prowess in arms and his taste in art, full of graceful compliment by classic implications, Beaujoyeux follows with an address :

#### AU LECTEUR

"Povrant, amy Lecteur, que le tiltre et inscription de ce livre est sans example, et que l'on n'a point veu par cy deuant aucun Balet auoir esté imprimé, ny ce mot de Comique y estré adapté : je vous prieray ne trouver ny l'un ny l'austre éstrange. Car quant au Balet, encores que ci soit vne inuention moderne, ou pour le moins, repétéé si long de l'antiquité, que l'on la puisse nommer telle : n'estant à la verité que des meslanges geometriques de plusieurs personnes dansans ensemble sous vne diverse harmonie de plusieurs instruments : je vous confesse que simplement representi par l'impression, cela eust eu beaucoup de nouveauté, et peu de beauté, de reciter vne simple Comedie : aussi cela n'eust pas esté ny bien excellent, ny digne d'vne si grande Royne qui vouloit faire quelque chose de bien magnifique et triomphant.

Sur ce je me suis avisé qu'il ne seroit point indecent de mesler l'un et l'autre ensemble, et diversifier la musique de poesie, et entrelacer la poesie de musique et le plus souvent les côfrondre toutes deux ensemble : aussi que l'antiquité ne recitoit point ses vers sans musique, et Orphée ne sonnoit jamais sans vers, j'ay toutes fois donné le premier tiltre et honneur à la danse, et le second à la substâce, que j'ay inscrite Comique, plus pour la belle tranquille et heureuse conclusion,

ou elle se termine, que pour la qualité des personnages, qui sont presque tous dieux et déesses, ou autres personnes heroiques.

Ainsi j'ay animé et fait parler le Balet, et chanter et resonner la Comedie : et y adjoustant plusieurs rares et riches representations et ornements, je puis dise avoir contenté en un corps bien proportionné, l'œil, l'oreille, et l'entendement. Vous priant que la nouveauté, ou intitulation ne vous en face mal juger ; car estant l'invention principalemēt. Composée de ces deux parties, je ne pouvois tout à la Comedie, distinctement representée par ses scènes et actes : ny à la Comedie sans prejudicier au Balet, qui honore, esgaye et rempli d'harmonieux recits le beau sens de la Comedie.

Ce que m'estant bien avis vous avoir deu abondamment instruire de mon intention, je vous prie aussi ne vous effaroucher de ce nom et prendre le tout en aussi bonne par, comme j'ay désiré vous satisfaire pour mon regard."

Although the quaint spelling of the old French may offer a little difficulty to some readers, I have felt it advisable to give the address as it stands, for, once it is seen that the "u" in some words means "v" (as *pouuois=pouvois*), the extract offers no real difficulty, and presents several points of extraordinary interest. First and foremost is the fact that it claims Beaujoyeux's ballet to be the first ever *printed!* And his description, too, of a ballet as "*meslanges géométrique de plusieurs personnes dansans ensemble,*" is extremely interesting.

Pylades, the Latin dancer-mime, declared that no man could become a perfect mime who did not understand music, painting, sculpture and geometry! And a well-known Italian *maitre*—from Milan—with whom I was discussing Ballet some years ago remarked, as he held up a case of drawing instruments: "Here is the whole art of Chorography," or Ballet-composition. This may seem a somewhat exaggerated assertion, but it is a fact that without some knowledge of geometry it would be difficult for a composer of Ballet to tell the effect that would be produced by lines and groups of dancers in the sight of a huge audience all looking at the stage from different angles.

Beaujoyeux's claim to appeal to, and to satisfy,

“ l'œil, l'oreille, et l'entendement ” is also interesting, and quite in accord with modern ideas of the Ballet.

The entertainment itself must have been a remarkable affair. It began with a fine water-display by a fountain with twelve sides, on each of which were two naiads with musical instruments, for the “ concert ” which accompanied the singers. Above the fountain-basin, which was full of fish, rose another on pillars, where twelve niches made seats for so many nymphs. In the middle, dolphins carried a crown and formed a throne for the Queen. Two other basins rose again above, formed of more dolphins which spouted great jets of water, and the whole was topped by a golden ball five feet in diameter.

It was from this “ machine,” drawn by sea-horses and accompanied by twelve tritons, and as many sirens with their instruments, that there descended the Queen, the Princesse de Lorraine, the Duchesses de Mercueil, de Guise, de Nevers, d'Aumale and de Joyeuse, Marechal de Raiz, and the Demoiselles de Pons, de Bourdeille and de Cypierre—who had all been seated in golden cars, and were dressed in silver cloth and crêpe, encrusted with gold bullion and precious stones ; and thus they made the first entrance, arranging themselves in twelve different figures. At the first entrance they were six abreast and three in front in a triangle, of which the Queen formed the first point.

After this impressive opening the ballet meandered through the story of Circe, with musical interludes, songs and dances and elaborate allegory. But as the first act began at ten in the evening, and the last did not finish till after five in the morning, it will be seen that the production was as lengthy as it was magnificent. Some idea of the splendour of the fête may be gathered from the fact that it cost something over three and a half million francs. The conclusion was graceful. The Queen and the Princesses, who had represented naiads and nereids, presented gold medals to the princes and seigneurs who, in the guise of tritons, had danced with them—presumably as a reward for their patience !

This presentation of gifts became quite a custom at these courtly ballets, of which doubtless the more modern *cotillon* is, or was, a survival.

Beaujoyeux's *Ballet Comique* set a fashion throughout Europe, and various Courts vied with each other in similar entertainment. The English Court had, of course, already had its ceremonial balls and "masks," but their spendour had been nothing to this ; and the subsequent fêtes at the Courts of Elizabeth and James were directly influenced by the example of the French in this direction, as we shall see when we come to deal with the true English masque as a form of Ballet.

## CHAPTER VII

### ELIZABETHAN DANCE-LOVERS

**F**OR the development of the art of Ballet, England, like Russia, owes far more to Italy and to France than most students of dance history seem to be aware ; few study it in sufficient detail or go far enough back, which is a pity, for to do so is to find an immense wealth of suggestion as to themes for Ballet-composition.

In Italy, as in Spain and Portugal, the *ballet-ambulatories*, symbolical in character and performed in the streets and public places, had been a popular feature from the early fifteenth century ; but, in addition to these spectacles of the people, there also grew up a vogue for private entertainments in the princely and ducal houses of Italy, such as di Botta's famous fête in 1489.

The fashion, however, did not arrive in England until 1512, when, as Edward Hall, the chronicler of that period, tells us : "On the day of the Epiphany, at night, the King with eleven others were disguised after the manner of Italy called a mask, *a thing not seen afore in England*.

"They were apparelled in garments long and broad, wrought all with gold, with visors and capes of gold ; and after the banquet done, these Masquers came in with six gentlemen disguised in silk, bearing staff-torches, and desired the ladies to dance. Some were content, and some that knew the fashion of it refused, because it was a thing not commonly seen. And after they danced and communed together, as the fashion of the masks is, they took their leave and departed ; and so did the Queen and all the ladies."

Some eighty years later Shakespeare gave us *Romeo and Juliet*, in which early we are introduced to an Italian "masking" in the following passage :

(Enter Romeo, Mercutio, Benevolio, with five or six Maskers, Torch-bearers and Others.)

Romeo : What ! shall this speech be spoke for our excuse ?  
Or shall we on without apology ?

*Benevolio* : The date is out of such prolixity,  
 We'll have no Cupid hoodwink'd with a scarf,  
 Bearing a Tartar's painted bow, of lath,  
 Scaring the ladies like a crow-keeper ;  
 Nor no without-book prologue, faintly spoke  
 After the prompter, for our entrance ;  
 But let them measure us by what they will :  
 We'll measure them a measure, and be gone.

*Romeo* : Give me a torch ; I am not for this ambling ;  
 Being but heavy, I will bear the light.

*Mercutio* : Nay, gentle Romeo, we *must* have you dance.

*Romeo* : Not I, believe me ; you have dancing shoes  
 With nimble soles ; I have a soul of lead  
 So stakes me to the ground I cannot move.

In Benevolio's ironic reference to "Cupid hoodwink'd with a scarf" and a "prologue, faintly spoke after the prompter," we find probably a gibe at some contemporary performance that had amused Shakespeare, and may even have suggested the joyous farce of Quince and his companions in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. To return, however, to *Romeo and Juliet*, one recalls Capulet's speech in welcoming his guests for the masque :

*Capulet* : Welcome, gentlemen ! I have seen the day  
 That I have worn a visor and could tell  
 A whispering tale in a fair lady's ear  
 Such as would please ; 'tis gone, 'tis gone ;  
 You are welcome, gentlemen ! Come, musicians, play.  
 A hall, a hall ! Give room ! And foot it, girls.  
 More light, you knaves, and turn the tables up,  
 And quench the fire, the room is grown too hot.  
 Ah, sirrah, this unlook'd for sport comes well.  
 Nay, sit, nay sit, good cousin Capulet ;  
 For you and I are past our dancing days ;  
 How long is't now since last yourself and I  
 Were in a Masque ?

Again, in *The Merchant of Venice* we find Shylock's bitter tirade against the street masquers :

*Lancelot* : You shall see a masque.

*Shylock* : What ! Are there masques ?  
 Hear you me, Jessica ;

Lock up my doors ; and when you hear the drum  
 And the vile squealing of the wryneck'd fife,  
 Clamber not you up to the casements then,  
 Nor thrust your head into the public street  
 To gaze on Christian fools with varnished faces.

Yet another reference to masquers is found in Shakespeare's *Henry the Eighth* in which the jovial monarch interrupts a banquet given by Cardinal Wolsey at York House :

*Chamberlain* : A noble troupe of Strangers,  
 For so they seem ; th'have left their Barge and landed,  
 And hither make, as great Ambassadors from foreign Princes.

*Cardinal* : Good Lord Chamberlaine,  
 Go, give 'em welcome ; you can speak the French tongue ;  
 And pray receive 'em nobly, and conduct 'em  
 Into our presence. . . .

(Enter King and others as Maskers, habited like Shepherds, ushered by the Lord Chamberlain. They pass directly before the Cardinal and gracefully salute him.)

In his *Life of Wolsey*, Cavendish writes that : "The banquets were set forth with masks and mummeries in so gorgeous a sort, and costly manner, that it was a heaven to behold. There wanted no dames, or damsels, meet or apt to dance with the maskers, or to garnish the place for the time, with other goodly disports. Then there was all kind of music and harmony set forth, with excellent voices both of men and children. I have seen the King suddenly come in thither in a mask with a dozen of other maskers all in garments like shepherds, made of fine cloth of gold and fine crimson paned, and caps of the same, with visors of good proportion of visimony ; their hair and beards, either of fine gold wire, or else silver and some being of black silk ; having sixteen torch-bearers, besides their drums, and other persons attending upon them, with visors, and clothed all in satin of the same colours."

Shakespeare's references to masques and masquers are thus extraordinarily interesting when we consider the evolution of Ballet. In *Romeo and Juliet*, for instance, one sees the masque as a private entertainment in the

house of an Italian nobleman ; in *The Merchant of Venice*, though still in an Italian setting, we find the reference is to street masquers ; in *Henry the Eighth* we see them again as a private entertainment in a nobleman's house, but with the added interest that the scene takes place in England, to which the custom had by now been imported, and with the King of England himself taking part.

The fashion of "disguisings," masques and "mummeries" which Henry VIII had thus copied from Italy also developed on similar lines in sixteenth-century France, where it culminated, as we have seen, in the wonderful *Ballet Comique de la Reine*.

The *Ballet Comique* was allegorical, and was performed by the leading people of the Court, from the Queen downwards. But, from an historical point of view, its chief importance is, that it largely influenced the subsequent entertainments at our English Court in the reigns of Elizabeth and James, and was directly instrumental in leading on towards the English literary *masque*, seen at its best in the work of Ben Jonson, whose work as a poet was well partnered by that of the famous architect-artist, Inigo Jones, a designer of costumes, with Dowland and Ferrabosco as the musicians, and Thomas Giles as the inventor of the dances.

The popularity of such entertainments is evidenced by several masques produced in Queen Elizabeth's own time ; and was fostered by the general love of dancing and music which was a feature of her period. Elizabeth was an accomplished player on the lute and virginals, and to all dancers she commends herself as a dancing queen, so fond of the art that she expected courtiers should show their skill in it, and was herself not averse from dancing a *galliard* when close on seventy !

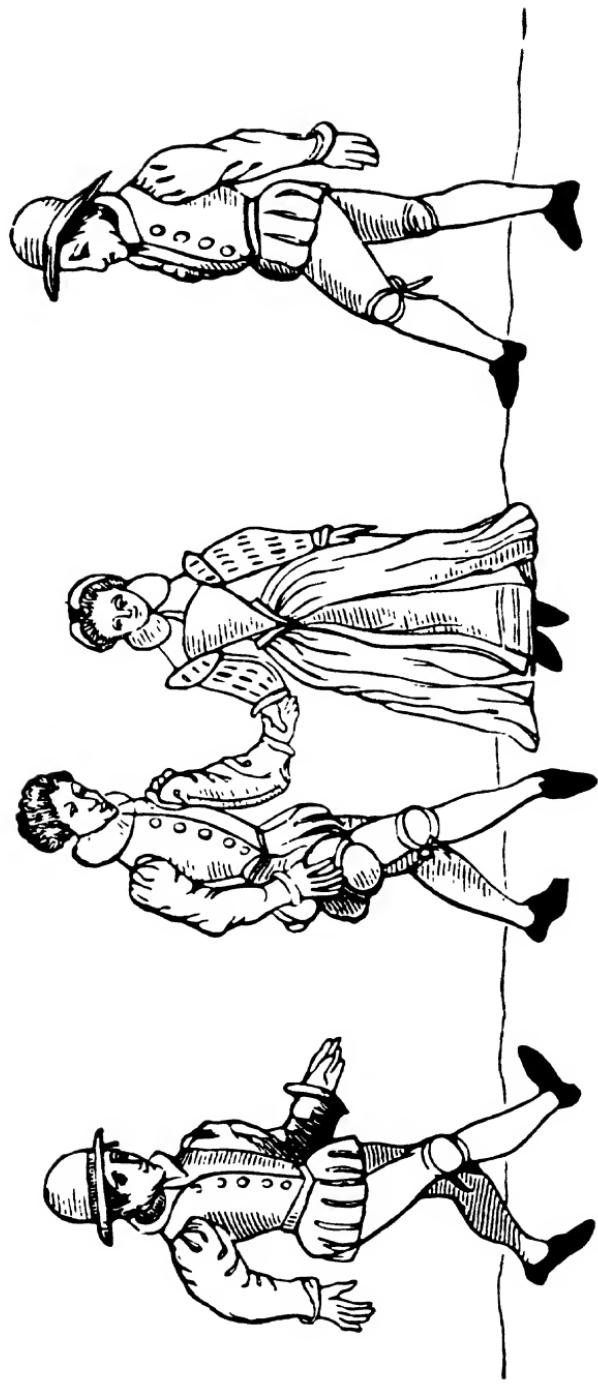
A dance, popular in her father's time, "Sellenger's (St. Leger's) Round," is included in a collection of manuscript music known as "Queen Elizabeth's Virginal Book" in the Fitzwilliam Museum at Cambridge.



#### DECOR IN THE 16TH CENTURY

Scene from the famous *Ballet Comique de la Reine*, of Balthasar de Beaujoyeau, produced in 1581.

A *gulli kid* of the man country.



Several musicians of her period who wrote for the virginal—forerunner of the spinet—have given us delightful *pavans* and *galliards*, and many are the references in contemporary literature to the sister arts of music and dancing.

Elizabeth's subjects were well-educated in music. No young man or maid had the faintest chance of social success unless they could sing fairly, and read music at sight. Most of the upper classes could play the virginal, the lute, the viol, and ladies were even found who did not disdain to play a bass viol. In the lower social grades it was the same. In every barber's shop a lute was kept for the use of customers. There was a craze for music, vocal and instrumental, and often the song was used as an accompaniment to a dance.

In a hand-book of musical instruction published in 1597, the word "Ballette" is given as meaning "songs, which, being sung to a dittie, may likewise be danced." Earlier than this, in 1565, a printer, William Pickering, had been licensed by the Stationers' Company to print "A Ballett, intitled *All in a Garden Grene*"; and the tune of this was included under that title in Playford's *The Dancing Master* when it came to be published first in 1651.

Another very popular "ballett," or dance-song, is referred to by Ben Jonson in his *Bartholomew Fair* as follows :

*Night* : To the tune of Paggington's Pound, sir ?

*Cokes* : (Sings) Fa, la, la, la, la la la, fa la la la !

Nay, I'll put thee in tune and all ! Mine own country-dance !  
Pray thee begin.

The tune of "Pagington's Pound" is also included in Elizabeth's virginal manuscript book. Ben Jonson's works, especially his *Masques*, contain numerous references to dancing, to which further attention will be given presently.

A slightly earlier poet, Michael Drayton, in one of the most delightfully fantastic poems in the English language,

his "Nymphidia : The Court of Fairy," speaks of "little frisking elves" :

" Which maids think on the hearth they see  
When fires well-near consumèd be,  
There dancing 'hays' by two and three  
Just as their fancy cast them."

The "hay" was a round dance, according to some authorities, but there is more reason to think it meant really a chain dance, of which the "grand-chain" of the old Lancers was possibly a survival.

Shakespearean references to dancing—apart from masques—are numerous. In *Love's Labour's Lost* is the following passage :

*Moth* : Master, will you win your love with a French brawl ?  
*Arm.* : How meanest thou ? *Brawling* in French ?  
*Moth* : No, my complete master, but to jigg off a tune at the tongue's end, *canary* to it with your feet.

Here we see the English pronunciation of the old French word *branle*, the dance of which Arbeau gives full account, and a reference to the "canary," with which he also deals.

In *Troilus and Cressida* is a reference to the "high lavolt." This properly was *la volta*, described by Arbeau as existing in France in his day. It is also referred to by the Elizabethan musician, Morley, who defines it as "a lofty jumping," of the same "measure" as the *coranto*, which was in triple time. *La volta* practically means "the flight," or "the leap, or vaulting," and does describe the special feature of the dance, which was performed by one man and one woman, and involved a leap from the ground by the woman as she was partly lifted and swung round by her partner. It was the forerunner of our more sedate modern *valse*.

The *volta* and *coranto* appear to be indicated in the one really great work in English literature dealing with dancing, namely Sir John Davies' richly imaginative and finely musical poem "*Orchestra*."

Sir John Davies was a law-student, and was about twenty-five when he wrote—in three weeks, it is said—

his "Orchestra, or a Poeme on Dauncing," first published in 1596, only eight years after Arbeau's famous work. The poem was never completed, but the one hundred and thirty odd stanzas he has left us well repay reading. They are, of course, rich in classical allusion ; but a particularly interesting point is that he refers to the dance-measures in terms usually applied to the analysis of verse, as in stanza 69 :

" What shall I name those currant travases  
That on a triple dactyl foot do run  
Close by the ground with sliding passages ? "

For "currant travases" read "*coranto traverses*," or "cross-running," and for "sliding passages" read "sliding steps" (pas—step) ; and one gets a fair idea of what the *coranto* really was, for the triple *dactyl* gives the exact time-value of the dance, a *dactyl* in verse being three syllables, the first accented ; the others, short. Thus the *coranto* was made up of three running steps, *terre-à-terre*, and with a kind of sliding movement, while the dancers *traversed* or crossed each other in performing the dance.

The poem recounts the wooing of the adorable Penelope—reputed widow of that distinguished Greek explorer Ulysses !—by a handsome youth, Antinous. He tries to persuade her to learn to dance by telling her a remarkable history of the art from its earliest and most mythic origins. She hesitatingly confesses :

" My feet, which only Nature taught to go,  
Did never yet the art of footing know."

And she asserts that the art is a modern folly and "disorder," unknown to her forefathers ! Whereupon he politely seeks to correct her, assuring her, on the contrary, that it began when the world itself began, and when the alleged "four elements"—fire, air, earth and water—did agree :

" By Love's persuasion—Nature's mighty King—  
To leave their first disordered combating,  
And in a dance such measure to observe  
As all the world their motion should preserve.

Since when, they still are carried in a round,  
 And, changing, come on in another's place ;  
 Yet do they neither mingle nor confound,  
 But everyone does keep the bounded space  
 Wherin the Dance doth bid it turn or trace ;  
 This wondrous miracle did Love devise,  
 For Dancing is Love's proper exercise."

*With ample illustration Antinous then proceeds to expound his philosophy, to the effect that Love brought Order out of original Chaos by causing all things to dance "in ordered measure."* The round, great earth itself, he declares, is *not* simply a "fortuitous concurrence of atoms." "By what means," he asks, "*could* the various atoms (or 'motes' as he calls them) have been brought together?" He answers :

" They err that say they did concur by chance ;  
 Love made them meet in a well-ordered dance.  
 When Love had shaped this world . . .  
 And had instructed it to dance aright.  
 The comely order and proportion fair  
 On every side did please his wand'ring eye ;  
 Till, glancing through the thin transparent air,  
 A rude, disordered rout he did espie  
 Of men and women, that most spitefully  
 Did one another throng, and crowd so sore  
 That his kind eyes in pity wept therefore.  
 And swifter than the lightning down he came,  
 Another shapeless Chaos to digest ;  
 He will begin another world to frame  
 (For Love, till all be well, will never rest),  
 Then with such words as cannot be expressed  
 He cuts the troops, that all asunder fling,  
 And ere they wist, he casts them in a ring."

Having done so, Love, appearing to them in visible and dazzling shape, addresses them thus :

" If sense hath not yet taught you, learn of me  
 A comely moderation and discreet,  
 That your assemblies may well-ordered be ;  
 When my uniting powers shall make you meet,  
 With heavenly tunes it shall be tempered sweet,  
 And be the model of the World's great frame,  
 And you, Earth's children, 'Dancing' shall it name."

After that he urges mankind to observe that everything in creation dances, according to its own rule and measure—the Sun, the Moon, the starry spheres, the Earth and the Air ; indeed, he asks :

“ For what are breath, speech, echoes, music, winds,  
But dancing of the air in sundry kinds ? ”

For when you breathe, the air in order moves,  
Now in, now out, in time and measure true ;

For all the words that from our lips repair  
Are naught but tricks and turnings of the air,  
Hence is her prattling daughter, Echo, born,  
That dances to all voices she can hear.

And thou, sweet Music, Dancing’s only life,  
The ear’s sole happiness, the air’s best speech,  
Lodestone of fellowship, charming-rod of strife,  
The soft mind’s Paradise, the sick mind’s leech,  
With thine own tongue, thou, trees and stones can teach,  
That, when the Air doth dance her finest measure,  
*Then art thou born, the gods’ and men’s best pleasure.*”

In further fine lines he speaks of the dancing sea, of streams that dance as they run, flowers that dance before the wind, birds dancing in the air, until, according to Antinous, Love so works upon the minds and hearts of those he had come down to address, all feel “ that they would learn to dance—if Love would teach.”

He then describes to his hostess, Penelope, how Love has taught humanity the various dances it knows ; and, finally, himself inspired by love, Antinous so moves the mind and heart of the Princess Penelope, that she alters her views as to the triviality and modernity of the world-old and ever-lovely art ; and, finally, “ vouchsafed awhile ” :

“ With gracious, cheerful and familiar eye  
Upon the revels of her Court to smile,”

although they had taken to Dancing !

One cannot help feeling glad that, even if Antinous’ remarkably persuasive tongue may not have been able

to win the lady's heart from her travelling liege-lord, Ulysses, he was at least able to bring about an enlivening of a court that, without dancing, must otherwise have been a strangely dull one for the glad days of Ancient Greece !

## CHAPTER VIII

*ARBEAU'S "ORCHÉSOGRAPHIE," 1588*

OVER three centuries ago lived the sage and elderly gentleman, Thoinot Arbeau, whose book with its strange title, "*Orchésographie*," was published in 1588 ; though Thoinot Arbeau was *not* his name, but a sort of anagram on his real one, Jehan Tabourot. Moreover, he was sixty-seven when his book was published ; was a canon of the Church ; was born at Dijon in 1519, and was the son of one Estienne Tabourot, a King's Counsellor ! And, born nearly four hundred years ago, he yet can speak to our time, telling us, albeit in somewhat stiff and difficult French, of the dances that were in vogue in *his* dancing days.

As to the title of his work, its meaning will of course be apparent to all who know anything of the history of its subject, for they will remember the Greek word for the Dance ; and so "*Orchésographie*" is simply a treatise on the writing of dances ; that is, the setting of them down in such form that subsequent readers could study the dances therefrom.

The successful recording of the actual steps of dances has always been rather a problem, and other, later, masters in France (such as Beauchamp, Pécourt, Feuillet) and in England (such as Weaver) made several more or less successful attempts during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries at inventing a sort of dance-shorthand.

The first author to attempt such a thing with any real success was apparently our friend Arbeau ; for earlier works, such as that of Caroso, are none too clear. Into the full details of his system I do not propose to enter here, for the interest of Arbeau's work is by no means merely technical.

The book, which was published at Lengres in 1588, is written in the form of a dialogue by which, to give the quaint phraseology of the original, "everyone can easily learn and practise the honest exercise of the

dances," the two speakers being Arbeau, the author, and Capriol, a youth who, some few years earlier, had left Lengres to go to Paris and Orleans, and now on his return has sought out Arbeau to learn from him all that he can of dancing.

Thoinot at first does not recognise him because, as he says : " You have grown so ; and I believe that you have also enlarged your spirit by virtue and knowledge." He asks the young man's opinion of the study of Law, remarking that he was also once a law-student.

Capriol expresses his admiration for the Law as a necessary institution, but complains that his neglect of the polite arts, while in the company of the Orleans law-students, has made him somewhat dull. He adds that his knowledge of fencing and tennis makes him an acceptable companion with other youths, but he fails as a dancer to please the demoiselles, a point on which, it seems to him, depends the whole reputation of a young man contemplating marriage.

Then follows some sound advice, with curious details, from Arbeau, on the advantages of dancing as a matrimonial agent ; and he acclaims the art as one very necessary to social welfare.

Capriol agrees, and expresses his disgust that the Dance should have been so subject to bitter attacks, of which he quotes historic instances. Arbeau neatly responds that : " For one who has blamed, an infinity have esteemed and praised the art," also following with quoted examples, saying, indeed, that "*Le St. prophète royal dauid dàça au deuàt de l'arche de Dieu*," or, in other words, that "the holy prophet, King David, danced before the Ark of God."

In the course of their conversation, Arbeau makes scholarly references to the derivation of the word "dance," mentioning others, then in use, that were allied to it, such as *saulter* (from the Latin *saltare*) ; *caroler* (hence our "carols," or songs which, originally, accompanied certain religious dances) ; *baler*, and *trepiner*.

Capriol then recalls the fact that the ancients had

three kinds of dances : the sedate *Emmeleia*, the gay *Kordax* and the mixed *Sikinnis*, the first of which Arbeau likens (perhaps unhistorically) to the *pavanes* and the *basse-dance* of his own period ; the second, to the *gaillardes*, *voltas*, *corantos*, *gavottes* (note that—a reference to the *gavotte* in 1588 !) and *branles* (or, as Elizabethan Englishmen called them, “*brawls*”); while the third, he declares, must have been similar to the *branles doubles*, and to “the dance which we call *bouffons* or *matachins*.”

Then, very wisely, he points out that most objections to dancing have been provoked *not* by decent but by objectionable dancing ! And then, as Capriol hastily assures his teacher that *he* wants none of *that* sort, but is only anxious to teach his twelve-year-old sister what Arbeau is good enough to teach him, the old man proceeds on methodical lines.

Arbeau, truly remarking that “rhythm is the basis of the Dance, as it was always of all military marching and evolutions,” then goes on to give a wonderful disquisition on that glorious instrument, the drum, with a masterly analysis of its rhythmic possibilities, both as an inspirer of soldiers on the march and as a stimulus to the dance.

The old man’s enthusiasm for an instrument that has never really received its due homage is truly fine, and he gives no less than seventy-six examples of drum-beat on a common-time basis. He follows this with an exposition of fife-playing (with musical examples); his earnest plea for this study of drum (*tambour*) and fife being only preparatory to a study of the *basse-dances*, which were properly accompanied by both instruments.

As several of these dances of centuries agone have been revived, it will be of interest to consider them in some detail, more especially as they formed the choreographic basis of all the ballets subsequently for some two centuries. Arbeau informs us that most of what he calls the “recreative” dances (or as we might say “social,” as opposed to the more ceremonial affairs necessitating an orchestra) were performed in his

forbears' time to the music of the flute and little drum.

Capriol asks : " Tell me, what are these dances, and how are they done ? "

To which Arbeau replies that " they danced, in his father's days, '*pavanes*, *basse-dances*, *branles* and *courantes*', which have been in use some forty or fifty years."

Capriol then asks : " How did our fathers dance the *basse-danse*," to which Arbeau replies that they had two sorts, the one common and regular, the other irregular, the former being danced to "*chansons régulières*," and the latter to "*chansons irrégulières*" : and he proceeds to explain that, for the former song there were sixteen bars which were repeated, making thirty-two to commence with ; then a middle part of sixteen bars ; and a close of sixteen, repeated ; making eighty bars in all. If the air of the song was longer than this, the *basse-danse* played on it was termed " irregular." He then explains that the *basse-danse* proper was in three parts, the term being really only applied to the first ; the second being called "*retour de la basse-danse*" ; and the third, and last, being termed "*tordion*."

Then comes the following :

" *Memoire des mouvements pour la basse-danse,*  
 R b ss d r d r b ss ddd r d  
 r b ss d r b c."

Not unnaturally, Capriol requests a translation of this cryptic-looking array of letters. It is better understood when one hears that " R " stands for *reverence*, " b " for a *branle*, " ss " for *deux simples*, " d " for a *double* (or three " ddd " for three " doubles ") ; the small " r " stands for a *réprise*, and " c " for *congé* : all of which are terms understood by dancers of to-day.

He gives very careful directions not only for performing the "*reverence*," the "*simple*," the "*double*," the "*réprise*," and the "*congé*," but for performing the various movements of the *basse-danse*, the *retour*, and the *tordion* : as, for instance, when he remarks that : " You begin the dance of the *tordion* which is in triple time, just

like the *basse-danse*; but it is (to give his own words) *plus légère and concitée.*"

He describes the *pavane* as "easy" to dance, and gives details of its performance, together with the music of that famous and lovely example: "*Belle qui tiens ma vie captive,*" the words being given in full, for four voices and *tambour* accompaniment.

The *gaillarde*, he says, is so-called "*parce qu'il fault estre gaillard et dispos pour la dancer*": and, with much detail as to its performance, he explains that, while danced somewhat like the *tordion*, the latter is done "*plus doucement, et avec actions et gestes moins violents.*"

He gives nearly a dozen musical examples for the *gaillarde*, one called "*La traditors my fa morire*": another "*Anthoinette*": another, with the charming title "*Baisons nous, belle*": another, "*Si j'ayme, ou non?*"

Capriol, by the way, remarks *apropos* the second-named, that: "At Orleans, when we give *Aubades*, we always play on our lutes and *guiternes* a *gaillarde* called 'La Romanesque,' but that it seemed so hackneyed and trivial that he and his companions took to '*Anthoinette*,' as being livelier and having a better rhythm."

The *gaillarde* was in triple time, and was made up of five steps (or four steps, and a leap) and one "position"; the term *cinq pas* also being alternatively applied to it, hence the Shakespearean "cinque-pace" and "sink-a-pace."

The *volte*, from which is derived the modern *valse*, was described by Arbeau as "a species of *gaillarde* familiar to the Provençals," danced, like the *tordion*, in triple time, and consisting of two steps and a leap. The *volte*, or *volta*, as it was often called, was popular in England, as was the *gaillarde*, and references to it are found in Shakespeare (*Troilus and Cressida*), and in Sir John Davies' poem, "Orchestra, or a Poeme on Dauncing," with which we have already dealt.

Arbeau describes the *courante* as being very different

from the *volte*. It is also (in contrast to the *parades* and *basse-dances*) a *danse sautée*, but in twelve time, with running steps, requiring from time to time not the quick, light leaping of a *volte*, but the sort of slow soaring kind of step for which Vestris was famous in the eighteenth century, and Nijinsky, Volinin and Bolm performed so superbly in more recent days.

Arbeau says that, in his youth, the dance was given as a kind of "ballet" by three young men and three girls, with grace and dignity, and he bewails its subsequent decadence. In Shakespeare's *Henry the Fifth*, we have the following :

*Bourbon* : They bid us to the English dancing-schools  
And teach *lavoltas* high and swift *corantos* ;

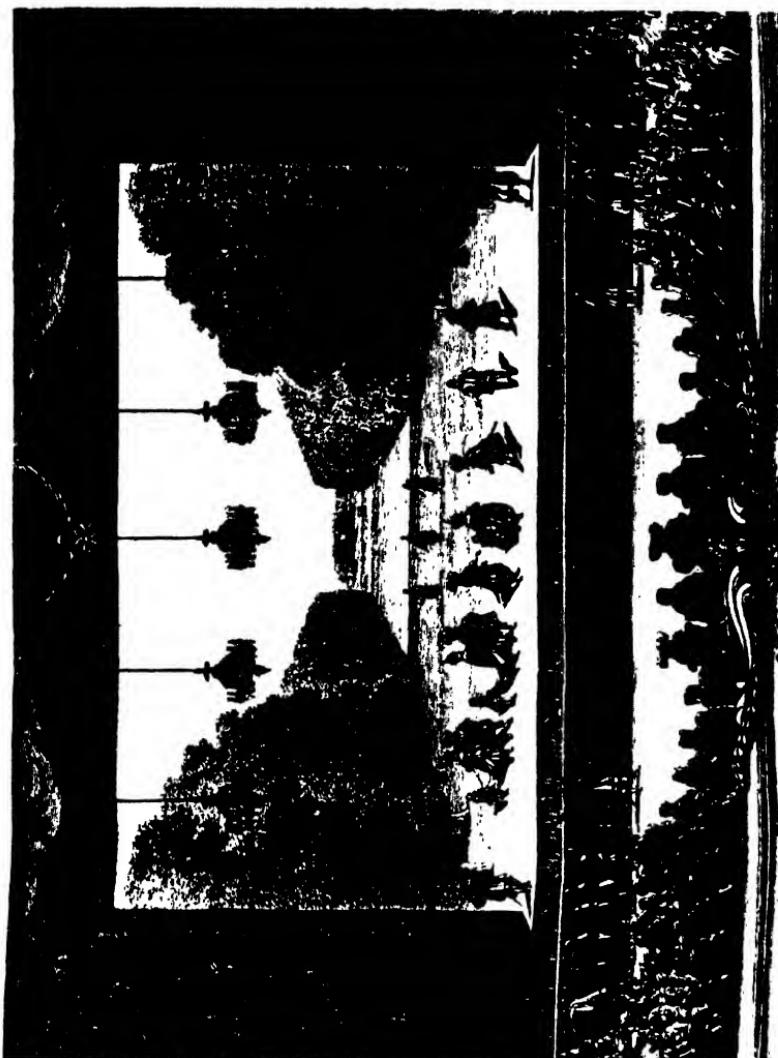
and Sir Toby Belch, it will be recalled, asks : " Why dost thou go to church in a *galliard* and come home in a *coranto*? My very walk should be a jig . . . sink-a-pace."

There seems, however, considerable ground for question as to what *courante*, or *coranto*, really was, whether a slow or quick dance. Arbeau's directions are, for once, not quite clear. He speaks of it being a more graceful affair in his younger days ; and he was an old man at the time his "*Orchésographie*" was published. In England it certainly seems to have become a fairly lively dance, of which the main feature was its "running" steps.

In France that characteristic seems to have been the same, though the *tempo* may have been slower. Certainly it became slower there, for the *courante* under Louis Quatorze was considered a dull dance, finally languishing in favour of newer types, requiring a more developed and quicker technique.

However, dances alter in character, like everything else, in the course of time. The *waltz* or *valse* has considerably altered since it was first introduced into London drawing-rooms—and considered shocking!—in the first decade of the nineteenth century ; and there is

FRENCH BALLET IN THE 17TH CENTURY





INDIAN COMMUNION OF THE PARKS FROM CHINCHAY  
Lima Andes, Peru, from *Wonders of the Americas*, 1850

considerable difference between modern *valse* and that of Victorian days. It is probable that the *courante* of Arbeau's period was quite as varied in performance as, let us say, the *tango* of our later time.

Let us return, however, to his description of other dances of his period. The *Allemande*, he explains, "*est une dance plaine de mediocre gravité, familière aux Allemands, et croy qu'elle soit de noz plus anciennes, car nous sommes descendus des Allemandes.*" It was danced by two or more people, in twelve time, and, later, was a very popular dance with Louis XIII.

A lengthy description follows of the *Branle*, which is also sometimes spelt *Bransle*, and from which comes our English word "brawl," the meaning of which has sadly degenerated from its original significance.

Saying that, "since you know how to dance the *pavane* and the *basse-dance*, it will be easy for you to dance the *branles*," he then proceeds to give account of over a score, including two which seem later to have assumed a right to be considered as separate dances, namely, the *Triory de Bretagne* (or simply, the "Triory") and the *Branle de la Haye*, sometimes called merely the "Haye," "Hay" or "Hey," which was an interlacing chain-dance, the word "Haye" meaning, of course, a "hedge."

Among the examples Arbeau gives is a *Branle d'Escosse*, of which he says : "*Les branles d'Escosse estoient en vogue y à environ vingt ans,*" and it is much like the customary Scotch reel. The *Branles des Lavandières*, he explains, is so called because the dancers make a noise by clapping their hands to represent that made by the washer-women who wash their clothes on the banks of the Seine. Another, the *Branle du Chandelier*, was danced with lighted candles, an old dance dating back to mediæval times.

A description of the *gavotte* follows, and it is interesting to note that this dance, still seen on the stage sometimes to-day, was an established favourite as far back as 1588. Then comes an account of the "Morisque" dance, the origin of which Arbeau places in the *Saturnalia* of the

ancient world, not without reason, one fancies ; and then he gives account of the *Canaries*, which, he explains, *some* say takes its name from the Canary Isles, while others derive it "from a ballet composed for a masquerade in which the dancers were dressed as kings and queens of Mauretania, or even as savages therefrom, with head-dress of varied plumage."

The last chapter is devoted to the dance of "Bouffons," a dance with sword and buckler, supposedly derived from ancient Rome (probably a form of the old Greek pyrrhic dance), and a never-failing source of delight to French play-goers and opera-lovers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Before the "dialogue" actually closes, young Capriol politely thanks Monsieur Arbeau for the trouble he has taken to teach him dancing ; and Arbeau responds by promising a second volume (alas ! never written) dealing with the ballets of the masquerades "made" at Lengres. He urges him meanwhile to practise "*les dances honnestement*," and so become a worthy comrade of the planets "*qui dancent naturellement*" : and he closes his discourse very prettily with the words, "*Je prie Dieu vous en donne la grace.*"

We have lingered somewhat over this old manual of dancing, but there are some half-dozen points in the history of Ballet which it is of vital importance to emphasise, and this is one of them.

Dancing itself, of course, had continued to exist through all time. But from the decadence of Rome until fairly late in the fifteenth century, Ballet had only a nebulous existence ; and the publication of Beaujoyeux's book of the *Ballet Comique de la Royne* in 1582, and Arbeau's "*Orchésographie*" in 1588, indicates a turning-point in the history of Ballet—the point where a popular amusement was once again taken up by men of intellect and given a new form and a new spirit.

Beaujoyeux created an interest in Ballet ; Arbeau assisted an advance in the technique of one of the chief elements of the art, namely, Dancing ; and there can

be little doubt that both men were largely instrumental in forwarding that movement towards popular delight in the theatrical Masque and Ballet, which were to become an outstanding feature of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

## CHAPTER IX

### SCENIC EFFECT : THE ENGLISH MASQUE AS BALLET

**I**N considering di Botta's elaborate feast, and Beaujoyeaux's "ballet," one is struck by their similarity to those English "disguisings" and masques which, as we have noted, were first introduced to the Court of Henry VIII in 1512 as a novelty from Italy, but only began to assume definite literary form about a century later. That century also contributed towards the development of scenic effect.

In studying Arbeau's manual of contemporary dance and music, one is struck by another thing : he is dealing with a social amusement of the upper classes. The dances he describes were mainly the proper accomplishment of the well born, or were such of lower origin as might, with adaptation, become worthy of performance by more courtly dancers. It is certain he does not describe all the types of dance known to his period.

The old Provençal *rigaudon*, which was later to come into such favour owing to Camargo, is not referred to by Arbeau ; nor the languorous *sarabande*, which was probably of Moorish origin derived through Spain—or, possibly earlier, through Augustan Rome. The lively *chaconne* is another omission ; the *tresca* yet another. These, and perhaps others, must have existed in Arbeau's time and long before ; but would be among the traditional amusements of the people, and were not yet elected to the company of courtly dances.

It is needful to linger over these points here, for it accounts for much that we find in the subsequent development of theatrical ballets in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Speaking of Beaujoyeux's *Ballet Comique*, Castil Blaze, the scholarly historian of the Paris opera, remarks that it "became the model on which were composed a number of ballets, sung and danced, a kind of piece which held the place of Opera among the French and English for about a century." That century was, roughly, from about 1500 to 1600. And he adds : "The English gave them the name of *masque*."

In the few years after Henry VIII came to be crowned, the young monarch, as we have noted, spent considerable time and expense in entertaining himself and his Queen with "disguisings," "revels" and masqued balls. Later came the introduction of singing, and dialogue, as well as dancing, some sort of allegorical story usually forming the basis of the masque. In Beaujoyeux's "ballet" of 1581, we have all this.

Up to then, in England, the masque made no great advance beyond those of Henry VIII's early years. In Beaujoyeux's "ballet," however, we have all that had been, and more. We have dancing, singing, dialogue, elaborate scenic effect, all in illustration of a mythic and allegorical story : and achieving a definiteness and grandeur of form hitherto unequalled, as well as publicity which made it famous throughout Europe. In some ways it was as much "masque" as "ballet," and as much opera as masque. Actually it did stimulate the development of the Masque in England ; and Opera in France.

At the English courts of Henry VIII and Elizabeth, the masque developed in the direction of scenic elaboration and splendour, with music that made up for its literary shortcomings, at least in its earlier period.

At the French courts of Henry IV and Louis XIII, what were known as "Opera-ballets" (later to be separated as Opera and Ballet) developed a musical richness and scenic effect that made up for similar literary shortcomings. Yet again came another form, in the *Comédie Ballet* of Molière.

With the accession of Elizabeth a love of dancing was encouraged at the English court ; and with the accession of James I of England came the real efflorescence of the English masque, which, under the hands of Ben Jonson, was to become a fairly balanced harmony of the three arts—the poet's, the musician's, and the painter-designer's.

It must of course be understood that in both the Masque and Ballet there was dancing ; but at the period with which we are now dealing, namely, the last decade

of the sixteenth and the first few decades of the seventeenth centuries, the technique of that art was—for stage purposes—comparatively so primitive as to make it almost a negligible quantity. There was dancing of course, that of “hench-men,” men and boys who performed a *Morris*, or *Bouffon-dances*: and that of courtier, court-lady, or even, it might be, a royal personage, who would take part in the stately *Pavan* or *Almain*, now and then unbending sufficiently to dance a “Trenchmore” (once Queen Elizabeth’s favourite) or “Canary.” But it was all either an intrusion, alien to the general purport of the production, or else overshadowed by the chief design, which was, to present, with the aid of “disguisings” and elaborate “machines,” a living picture or series of living pictures, expressing some mythological or allegorical episodes, and often embodying a courtly compliment towards some honoured guest. The chief aim was splendid pageantry; something mainly to please the eye; and, secondarily, to charm the ear; without making too great claims upon the intellect; and among the leading English writers of masques during the period we are considering were—George Gascoigne, Campion, Samuel Daniel, Dekker, Chapman, William Browne, Beaumont and Fletcher and Jonson.

In France, at the Court of Henri Quatre, and under the direction of his famous minister, Sully, who himself took part in them, some eighty “ballets” were given between 1589 and 1610, apart from State balls and *bals masques*.

In England, among the more notable “masques” produced during about the same period were the following :

1585. The Masque of *Lovely London*, performed before the Lord Mayor.
1589. A Masque planned by order of Queen Elizabeth in honour of the wedding of King James VI of Scotland and Anne of Denmark.
1594. A Masque before Queen Elizabeth at Whitehall.

1604. A Masque by Samuel Daniel, *The Twelve Goddesses*, arranged by Queen Anne, Consort of James I, in honour of the Spanish Ambassador at Hampton Court.
1605. *The Masque of Blackness*, by Ben Jonson (his first real masque), given on Twelfth Night at Whitehall.
1606. Jonson's *Masque of Hymen*, for the marriage of Robert Devereux, third Earl of Essex, with the Earl of Suffolk's younger daughter, Frances Howard.
1608. Jonson's *Masque of Beauty*—a sequel to the *Masque of Blackness*, at the request of the Queen Consort, who, with the Ladies of the Court, took part in the performance. This was followed in the same year by his *Hue and Cry after Cupid*, given at Court on Shrove Tuesday in celebration of Lord Viscount Haddington's marriage.

All these were elaborate productions ; those of Jonson being indeed beautiful. Their literary value has long been realised, and one sees in them some of his best work. The introductory descriptions, and the stage directions, are singularly minute and careful, and, in their way, are quite as well worth study as the beauties of his virile verse.

He writes of scenes and costumes as if he loved them : as when, in *The Masque of Blackness*, he describes the Moon, “triumphant in a silver throne. . . . Her garments white and silver, the dressing of her head antique, and crowned with a luminary or sphere of light ; which, striking on the clouds, and brightened with silver, reflected, as natural clouds do, the splendour of the moon. The heaven about her was vaulted with blue silk, and set with stars of silver, which had in them their several lights burning.”

And again : “The attire of the masquers was alike in all, without difference, the colours azure and silver ; but returned on the top with a scroll and antique dressings of feathers and jewels interlaced with ropes of pearl. And for the front, ear, neck and wrists the ornament was of the most choice and Orient pearl : best setting off from the Black.”

For the devising of the scenery and mechanical effects, or "machines," as they were called, there was Inigo Jones, the travelled artist-architect, who had seen many a "masking" in Italy; for the music there was Alfonso Ferrabosco, son of the Italian composer, appointed music master at the Court of James I; and, for *maitre-de-danse* there were Thomas Giles and Hieronimous Herne.

It was a noble company who took part in the performances. In *The Masque of Blackness*, though there were only three speaking parts, Oceanus, Niger and Æthiopia—the impersonators of which are not recorded—there was no less a personage than Queen Anne herself, Consort of King James, who appeared as "Euphoris," supported by the Countess of Bedford ("Aglaia"), Lady Herbert ("Diaphane"), the Countess of Derby ("Eucampse"), Lady Rich ("Ocyte"), Countess of Suffolk ("Kathare"), and other fair ladies of title.

The *Masque of Beauty*, a superb spectacle given at the Court some three years later by express command of Her Majesty, had for speaking parts only three, namely, those of Boreas, "in a robe of russet and white mixed, full and bagged; his hair and beard rough and horrid; his wings grey, and full of snow and icicles; his mantle borne from him with wives and in several puffs"; Januarius "in a throne of silver; his robe of ash colour, long, fringed with silver; a white mantle; his wings white and his buskins"; and Vulturnus "in a blue-coloured robe and mantle puffed as the former but somewhat sweeter; his face black, and on his head a red sun, showing he came from the East."

Following the entrance of Vulturnus, bringing—in reference to the former *Masque of Blackness*—the good news of his discovery of a lost isle whereon the black but lovely daughters of Niger had been languishing in obscurity, there came a fine pageant.

"Here," as Jonson's stage directions describe it, "a curtain was drawn, on which the Night was painted, and the scene was discovered which (because the former was marine, and these, yet of necessity, to come from the sea)

I devised should be an island, floating on a calm water. In the midst thereof was a Seat of State, called the Throne of Beauty, erected ; divided into eight squares and distinguished by so many Ionic pilasters. In these squares, the sixteen masquers were placed by couples ; behind them in the centre of the throne was a translucent pillar, shining with several coloured lights, that reflected on their backs. From the top of which pillar went several arches to the pilasters, in front, little Cupids in flying posture, waving of wreaths and lights, bore up the cornice ; over which were eight figures, representing the elements of Beauty, which advanced upon the Ionic, and, being females, had the Corinthian order."

They were "Splendour," "Serenitas," "Germanatio," "Lætitia," "Temperies," "Venustas," "Dignitas" and "Perfectio." Minute description is given of their garments, but is too lengthy for inclusion here. The stage directions then proceed :

" On the top of all the throne (as being made out of all these) stood Harmonia, a personage whose dressing had something of all the others, and had her robe painted full of figures. Her head was compassed with a crown of gold, having in it seven jewels equally set. In her hand a lyra, whereon she rested.

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" This was the ornament of the throne. The ascent to which, consisting of six steps, was covered with a multitude of Cupids (chosen out of the best and most ingenious youth in the kingdom, noble and others) that were torch-bearers ; and all armed with bows, quivers, wings and other ensigns of love. On the sides of the throne were curious and elegant arbours appointed ; and behind, in the back part of the isle, a grove of grown trees laden with golden fruit, which other little Cupids plucked, and threw at each other, whilst on the ground leverets picked up the bruised apples and left them half eaten. The ground-plat of the whole was a subtle indented maze ; and in the two foremost angles were two fountains that ran continually, the one Hebe's and the other Hedone's ; in the arbours were placed the

musicians, who represented the shades of the old poets, and were attired in a priest-like habit of crimson and purple, with laurel garlands.

“ The colours of the masques were varied ; the one half in orange tawny and silver ; the other in sea-green and silver. The bodies of short skirts on white and gold to both.

“ The habit and dressing for the fashion was most curious, and so exceeding in riches, as the throne whereon they lay seemed to be a mine of light, struck from their jewels and their garments.

“ This throne, as the whole island moved forward on the water, had a circular motion of its own, imitating that which we call *motum mundi*, from the east to the west, or the right to the left side. . . . The steps whereon the Cupids sat had a motion contrary, with analogy *ad motum planetarum*, from the west to the east ; both which turned with their several lights. And with these three varied motions, at once, the whole scene shot itself to the land.

“ After a chorus, with an echoing refrain, *Vulturnus*, the wind, spake to the river, *Thamesis*, that lay along between the shores, leaning upon his urn, that flowed with water, and crowned with flowers ; with a blue cloth of silver robe about him ; and was personated by Master Thomas Giles, who made the dances.

*Vul.* : Rise, Aged Thames, and by the hand  
Receive the nymphs, within the land,  
And in those curious squares and rounds  
Wherewith thou flow'st betwixt the grounds  
Of fruitful Kent and Essex fair  
That lends the garlands for thy hair ;  
Instruct their silver feet to tread,  
Whilst we, again, to sea are fled.

“ With which the Winds departed ; and the River received them into the land, by couples and fours, their Cupids coming before them.

“ These dancing forth a most curious dance, full of excellent device and change, ended it in the figure of a diamond, and so, standing still, were by the musicians

with a second song, sung by a loud tenor, celebrated.

“ So Beauty on the waters stood,  
When Love had severed earth from flood !  
So when he parted air from fire,  
He did with concord all inspire !  
And then a motion he them taught,  
The elder than himself was thought.  
Which thought was, yet, the child of earth,  
For Love is elder than his birth.

“ The song ended ; they danced forth their second dance, more subtle and full of change than the former ; and so exquisitely performed, as the King’s Majesty (incited first by his own liking to that which all others there present wished) required them both again after some time of dancing with the lords. Which time, to give them respite, was intermitted with a song.

“ This song was followed by others.

“ After which songs they danced *galliards* and *corantos* ; and with those excellent graces, that the music appointed to celebrate them, showed it could be silent no longer ; but, by the first tenor, admired of them thus :

#### SONG

Had those that dwelt in error foul,  
And held that women have no soul,  
But seen these move ; they would have then  
Said women were the souls of men ;  
So they do move each heart and eye  
With the world’s soul, true Harmony.

“ Here they danced a third most elegant and curious dance, and not to be described again by any art but that of their own footing, which ending in the figure that was to produce the fourth.

“ Januarius from his state saluted them thus :

*Janu.* : Your Grace is great, as is your Beauty, dames ;  
Enough my feasts have proved your thankful flames,  
Now use your seat ; that seat which was, before,  
Though straying, uncertain, floating to each shore,  
And to whose having every clime laid claim,  
Each land and nation urged as the aim

Of their ambition, Beauty's perfect throne  
 Now made peculiar to this place alone ;  
 And that by impulsion of your destinies,  
 And his attractive beams that lights these skies ;  
 Who, though with ocean compassed, never wets  
 His hair therein, nor wears a beam that sets.

Long may his light adorn these happy rites,  
 As I renew them ; and your gracious sights  
 Enjoy that happiness, even to envy, as when  
 Beauty, at large, broke forth and conquered men !

“ At which they danced their last dance into their throne again.”

These quotations, though necessarily restricted, illustrate the characteristic elements in the construction of the masque : dancing, music, song, spoken verse and—  
elaborate scenic effect.

The reference to Thomas Giles, “ who made the dances ” ; to the dances themselves, “ *galliards* and *corantos* ” ; and that charming admission as to “ a third most elegant and curious dance,” not to be described again “ by any art but that of their own footing ” ; the reference to the arbours, in which “ were placed the musicians, who represented the shades of the old poets, and were attired in a priestlike habit of crimson and purple, with laurel garlands ” ; the song of the “ first tenor ”—“ Had those that dwelt . . . ” ; and Januarius’s speech, apostrophising women’s beauty ; above all, the loving descriptions of the scenery and mechanical effects, must all be of uncommon interest to those who know anything of the history of the French Ballet, because it is so closely paralleled in the descriptions given, some seventy years later, by the Abbé Menestrier of the entertainments at the Court of Louis XIV. The English “ masques ” of the early seventeenth were, in effect, the French “ ballets ” of the early eighteenth century. To return, however, to the English Court of James I.

The Queen and Ladies of her Court once again took part in the entertainment of His Majesty as representatives of the various types of beauty introduced in the course of the masque. Yet again were they found in the

noble “‘Masque of Queens,’ celebrated from the House of Fame, by the Queen of Great Britain, with her Ladies at Whitehall, February 2nd, 1609,” which was dedicated to the young Prince Henry. As to the origin of this Ben Jonson gives the following interesting note : “ It increasing,” he says, “ to the third time of my being used in these services to Her Majesty’s personal presentations, with the ladies whom she pleaseth to honour ; it was my first and special regard, to see to the dignity of their persons. For which reason I chose the argument to be *A celebration of honourable and true Fame bred out of Virtue.*”

All of which in a sense foreshadowed the various symbolic ballets later at the Court of France, such as “*La Verité, ennemie des apparences,*” which we shall come to consider in due course.

The thing to realise now is, that these masques of Ben Jonson, and of other men of his period, were the finest flowering of a form of entertainment which had been struggling for definite shape throughout the previous century, indeed, from the days of di Botta’s fête in 1489, and had received its most recent and most effective stimulus from France in the production of Beaujoyeux’s wondrous symbolic and mythologic “ballet” some twenty odd years before Ben Jonson’s first “masque” was produced.

The English masque—partly dramatic “interlude” with song, music and dance introduced—was in effect a “ballet”; and was now to become a direct influence in the formation of the “opera ballets” which were subsequently to be the delight of the French Court for a century or more.

## CHAPTER X

### COURT BALLETS IN ITALY AND FRANCE, 1609-1650

WHILE the English Court was enjoying its masques, during the reigns of Henry VIII, Elizabeth and James, and the French were labouring forth their heroic ballets under Henri Quatre, Italy was similarly keeping up in the movement which her example had originally inspired.

It was the custom there to celebrate the birthday of princes by an annual public fête. The more usual of these celebrations were in the varied forms of "Carrousels, Tournois, des Comédies, des Actions en Musique, des Festins, des Feux d'Artifice, des Mascarades, quand ces Fêtes se trouvent au temps du Carnaval, des Presens, des Illuminations, des Chasses, des Courses sur la Neige et sur la Glace, suivant la saison, des Promenades, et des Jeux sur les Eaux," and the Court of Savoy, as we shall see presently, was particularly devoted to such entertainments. In 1609 there was a *ballet d'armes* entitled "*Il Sol nascente nell' oscurita dell' Tile,*" danced by the "Serene" Princes of Savoy, the occasion being the anniversary of the birth of their royal father, the Duke Charles Emmanuel.

A mounted ballet was produced at this same Court [Savoy] in 1615, for the arrival of the Prince d'Urbin. This was an attack, and a combat to music, against three hundred men on foot, who formed different companies of various shapes, lunated, oval, square and triangular. They had drilled their horses so well that they were never out of step with the rhythm of the music. There were numerous cars drawn by lions, stags, elephants, rhinoceroses, and so forth, and as they represented "The triumph of Love over War" the Four Quarters of the World followed the cars of the victors mounted in as many chariots. The Car of Europe was drawn by horses, that of Africa by elephants, that of Asia by camels, that of America by "unicorns"! The cars had engraved work on them by Callot.

In 1618 *The Elements*, a grand ballet and tourney, was

represented by the Duke of Savoy and his son, the Prince of Piedmont, on the former's birthday. *The Temples of Peace and War on Mount Parnassus*, a ballet and tourney, "avec un Festin à la Chinoise," formed the entertainment of the following year. *The Judgment of Flora on the Dispute of the Nymphs over the Crown of Flowers presented to Mme Royale on her Birthday* is the long and stately title of a fête given at Turin in 1620. *The Tribute of the Divinities of the Sky, Air, Sea and Infernal Regions* was a grand ballet and tourney of 1621. *The Ballet of the Seven Kings of China* was another.

One of the most remarkable, and, according to contemporaries, most beautiful ballets ever composed, was that of *Æolus, King of the Winds*, which Alfonso Ruggieri Sansoverino presented in the year 1628, at the wedding of the Prince of Tuscany, in the St. Croix Square in Florence. On one of the sides of this square was a large reef of rock, with a cave hollowed out of it, and closed by a great door secured with padlocks.

Don Anthony de Medici, who took the part of Master of the Combat, having reconnoitred the course, *Æolus, King of the Winds*, entered, accompanied by twelve watermen, to whom he "had taught the use of sails and the nature of the winds." Twelve tritons walked before him blowing their trumpets; eight sirens replied on other instruments, accompanied by Hoar-Frost; and eight pages represented the many effects of the Winds, causing cold, hot, damp, dry, clear, dull, serene or cloudy weather. The two sponsors walked behind their pages. The chariot of the Ocean followed, drawn by two big whales; it represented a rock covered with seaweed, coral and different kinds of shells. Nymphs of the sea, rivers and springs were seated on this rock, and gave a concert with wind instruments, presided over by Dolopea, wife of *Æolus*. *Æolus*, having passed in his chariot, and arrived in front of the Prince's box, saluted the bride, and having offered her his kingdom and all his troops, took a lance in his hand; then, suddenly departing, went and thrust against the door of the Cave of the Winds. The padlocks broke, and, the door being

opened, thirty-two mounted men, and a hundred and twenty-eight on foot, were set at liberty. The men, rushing like the winds they represented, ran to the other side of the square. Here Æolus stopped them and gave them orders to arrange themselves into a triangular figure, and in this order he led them to salute the Princess for whom the fête was arranged. After having taken their places, they began to manœuvre their horses in a ring on the right ; they went in single file to make a chain, and sixteen of them having broken it, they formed a smaller one, from which eight more detached themselves, making a still smaller one. The first horsemen, curveting, manœuvred their horses to perform *voltes* and *half-voltes*, joining again without a halt, and, forming twos, fours and eights, "they mingled capers at the galop, with caracolling in figures, performing a marvellous labyrinth with their intertwinnings and evolutions."

In the year 1628 the students of the College at Rheims, in joyful commemoration of the taking of La Rochelle, danced a "ballet," the design of which, after ancient Roman models, was *The Conquest of the Car of Glory by the great Theander*. Unlike the modern "revue," it boasted a plot.

The Giants of the Black Tower, trusting in the might of their magic, published a challenge "full of empty pride," by which they summoned all Knights-errant to the conquest of the Car of Glory. Wishing to chastise the insolence of these fiends, Lindamor arranges with three of his friends to go and fight them. The Black Tower was full of sorceries, and there was no means of opening it except by sounding an enchanted horn which the Giants had fastened to the Gate. Lindamor sounds it ; the Giants issue forth upon him and his comrades, and, the contest being unequal, Lindamor is compelled to withdraw and leave his comrades in the hands of the Giants, who load them with chains and fasten them to the Castle Gate to serve as a trophy to their vanity.

Some country shepherds who had seen the adventure



### THE DUCHESSE DU MAINE

Born 1666, died 1718. Who, at her country house at Sceaux in 1708, revived  
the art of Music.



### MILLE PRÉAULT

Star of the Ballet at the Paris Opera from c. 1795-1730, among her pupils being Camargo and Salle.

of Lindamor and the Giants, persuade a shepherd, Caspis, to take the part of the unhappy knights. The shepherd, who, for some reason, was above the power of all magic, presents himself before the captives, and first of all breaks their chains and sets them free. Lindamor, well pleased at the "courtesy" of Caspis, discusses with him the means of avenging himself on the Giants of the Black Tower. He learns from the shepherd that the sword of Cloridan is necessary for this enterprise, and that in order to get it he must put to sleep the Dragon to whom the Giants have given charge of the sword. The shepherd himself offers to do this, and succeeds. But to get the sword of Cloridan something more was wanted than merely to put the Dragon to sleep, and Caspis evokes the shade of Cloridan to find out from him how to make use of the sword successfully.

The shade when called up informs him that Theander alone is capable of using it. The rumour of this oracular response having got abroad, Vulcan, with his Cyclops, prepares arms for Theander, who, being preceded by "Renown" and followed by Lindamor, reaches the place where the sword of Cloridan is guarded and, after having chained the Dragon, seizes the sword, presents himself with it at the gate of the Black Tower, causes the gate to open at the sound of the horn, defeats the Giants, draws from the Tower the Car of Glory, harnesses the Giants to it, and finally triumphs over the arms and all the enchantments of his enemies.

The story, which smacks of some mediæval romance of chivalry, was really allegorical of the capture of La Rochelle. The late king was "Theander"; the shepherd "Caspis" was his Prime Minister, the Cardinal Richelieu; "Lindamor" was the King, Henry III, who, being as yet only Duke d'Anjou, had attempted this siege in vain. The sword of "Cloridan" was that of Clovis; the "Black Tower" was La Rochelle; and the magic spells were "Heresy" and "Rebellion."

Again, in the year 1628, a ballet of *The Court of the Sun*, by an Abbé Scotto, was danced at the Court of Savoy. "Night" played the overture, and at her

command spirits and goblins, coming on from different directions, made a "pleasing" entrance. "Night," however, warning them to be careful that "Day" did not surprise them, they retired into their caves, when the Morning Star introduced visions of the Morning, bright Dreams issuing from the ivory gate. Then the Star of Venus rose from the sea to announce the arrival of the loveliest Aurora ever seen, and ordered the Zephyrs to rise and to strew flowers, and the Dew to sprinkle perfumed water and the sweetest and most healthful influences. Aurora followed them, and having descended from Heaven, suddenly caused the Palace of the Sun (in Ionic architecture) to appear ; the seven Planets and the twelve Hours were seen in niches, from which they emerged to dance ; the Muses, in other niches, performed concerted movements ; "Time," the Year, the Seasons, the Months and the Weeks, providing the music.

From the last examples it is seen that "philosophic" as well as poetical and classic allegories were often used as the basis of the seventeenth-century ballets. The philosophic were "those in which causes and effects, peculiar qualities and the origin of things, were expressed in a suitable story by the devices of the ballet."

Several ballets of this kind were seen at the theatre of the College of Clermont, principally those of *Curiosity*, *Dreams*, *Comets*, *Illusions*, *The Empire of the Sun*, *Fashion*. In that of *Curiosity* it was desired to show that the good or bad use made of it contributes to the perfecting or ruining of the mind.

"Curiosity" was represented by four characters, each forming a part of the ballet. The first of these was "Useless Curiosity," which occupies itself only with trifles ; the second, "Dangerous Curiosity," which seeks forbidden and harmful things ; and it was indicated that these are the two kinds of curiosity to be avoided ! The third and fourth parts showed "Useful" and "Necessary Curiosity" respectively. Among "Useless Curiosities" was seen "Idleness," with a troop of

loiterers who ran about hunting for Gossip and False Rumours, merely to pass the time and "to find out what was going on in the world"; others who consulted almanacs to discover what the weather would be; and also sleepers, who, awakening, entertained each other with their dreams, from which they foretold what was about to happen!

"Mistakes," "New Opinions," "Alchemy," "Sorcery," "Magic" and "Superstition" were some of the "characters" in the scene showing "Dangerous Curiosity." "Reasonable Curiosity" was represented by travellers, whose desire to learn all about the manners and customs of different nations drove them into foreign countries; also "by physicians, who work to gain experience." In "Necessary Curiosity" was introduced the art of navigation, represented by sailors, who, under the guidance of Tiphys, helmsman of the *Argo*, set out "to discover new worlds"; another example of "Necessary Curiosity" being the fire brought from Heaven by Prometheus for people eager to discover its use. The poetical allegories were not less ingenious than the "philosophic," although "they did not pretend," as one old chronicler informs us, "to so much precision."

*Eternity* was the title of a ballet given in 1629, *Le Temps Eternel* following the next year, *La Felicité Publique* the next, and in 1632 *La Chasse Théâtrale, représentée en Ballet* by the Cardinal of Savoy at his country mansion was given in honour of his brother's, the Duke's, birthday.

Among the "moral" ballets there is hardly one more pleasing than that composed to commemorate the birthday of the Cardinal of Savoy in 1634, of which the subject was *Truth, the Enemy of Appearance, as proved by Time*, or *Verita Nemica della Apparenza sollevata dal Tempo*.

This ballet opened with a chorus of "False Rumours" and "Suspicions," followed by "Appearance" and "Lies"! They were curiously represented by farmyard characters who sang a dialogue, half in Italian and half in French, mingled with the cluckings of cocks and

hens. The amusing chorus by the latter ran as follows :

“ Su gli albori matutini  
 Cot, cot, cot, cot, cot cantando  
 Col cucurii s’inchini  
 E bisbigli mormorando  
 Fra i sospetti, e fra i Rumori  
 Cu, cu, cu, cu, cu, cu,  
 Salutiam del novo sol gli almi splendori.”

The cocks replied :

“ Faisant la guerre au silence  
 Cot, cot, cot, avec nos chants,  
 Cette douce violence  
 Ravit les Cieux et les Champs.  
 Et notre inconstant hospice  
 Cot, cot, cot, cot, cot cone  
 Couvre d’apparence un subtil artifice.”

After this quaint song the scene opened, and a large Cloud was seen, accompanied by the Winds. “ Appearance,” who also made her entrance at this moment, had wings and a long peacock’s tail, and her dress was hung with a number of mirrors ! She was brooding over some eggs, from which hatched out “ Pernicious Lies,” “ Deceits ” and “ Frauds,” “ White Lies,” “ Flatteries,” “ Intrigues,” “ Mockeries,” “ Ridiculous Lies ” and “ Idle Tales ” ! An eternal crew !

The “ Deceits ” were dressed in dark colours, with serpents concealed among flowers ; the “ Frauds,” clothed in hunters’ nets, struck bladders as they danced ; the “ Flatteries ” were dressed as monkeys ; “ Intrigues,” as lobster-catchers, with lanterns in their hands, and on their heads ; “ Ridiculous Lies ” were represented by beggars who pretended to be cripples with wooden legs. Then “ Time,” having driven away “ Appearance ” with all her “ Lies,” opened the nest on which she had been sitting, and there appeared a great hour-glass from which “ Time ” ordered “ Truth ” to come forth ; the latter then calling back all the “ Hours,” danced with them the *finale* of the “ grand ballet.” Surely the time is ripe for a revival of such a production !

One of the most interesting of these seventeenth-century entertainments was that on February 19th, 1640, when at the Court of Savoy was given a *Ballet of Alchemists*, in which, under a charming allegory, they made fun of those seekers of the philosopher's stone who pretend to make gold. Hermes Trismegistus, dressed as a philosopher, with the master's ring, introduces some of the most celebrated chemists of different nations : Morieno, an Italian ; Bauzan, a Greek ; Körner, a German ; Untser, a Swede ; Calid, a Turk ; Sandivoge, a Pole ; Raymond Lulli and Hortulaus, Spaniards ; Dolcon and Beguin, Frenchmen ; Pierre, a Lorrainer ; Rasis, a Jew ; and Geber, an Arab. The Italian and the Greek brought in a furnace of five storys, octagonal in shape. The German and the Swede brought in the alembics ; the Turk and the Pole came with flowers for distilling, which they carried in baskets ; the two Spaniards brought charcoal ; the French came with bellows to blow up the fire ; the Lorrainer carried sieves for sifting ; the Jew and the Arab had in front of them leatheren aprons with various pockets, in which they carried alum, vitriol, sulphur and ingots of metal. For the "grand ballet" they all worked together around the furnace, whence they drew a thousand pretty novelties to give to the ladies in the audience—essences, liqueurs, glass, jewellery, mirrors, bracelets, Cyprus powder, paint and other treasures, very much as presents have been given at Cotillons and big fancy dress balls in more modern times.

Yet another delightful production of this period must be chronicled, namely, the *Ballet of Tobacco*, danced at Turin on the last day of carnival, 1650. The scene represented the Isle of Tobago, "*from which tobacco took its name, and gave happiness to the nations to whom the gods had given this plant.*" First entered four High Priests of that country, who drew forth snuff from certain golden boxes which they carried, and threw the powder into the air to appease the Winds and Tempests. Then, with long pipes, they smoked around an altar, making of their smoking tobacco a sort of sacrificial incense to

their favourite deities. For the second "entry," two Indians were twisting tobacco leaves into a rope. Two others were pounding it in mortars to reduce it to powder which made the third scene. The fourth was of snuff-takers, who sneezed, and presented the snuff to each other, taking it in pinches with amusing ceremony; while the fifth was a band of smokers gathered together in an "Academy" for the study of smoking, wherein Turks, Spaniards, Poles and other nationalities "received the tobacco from the Indians and proceeded to take it in their different ways."

Such were some of the Continental ballets of the first half of the seventeenth century, a period, it must be admitted, not lacking in allegorical or poetic ingenuity, or in resource as to means of entertainment.

*BOOK II*  
*THE SECOND ERA*



## CHAPTER XI

### THE TURNING POINT : LOUIS XIV AND HIS ACADEMY OF DANCING, 1651-1675

FOR some two centuries Italy had amused herself with Ballet as a courtly entertainment. Now, in 1651, it was France who was to give the lead to Europe, for in February of that year Louis XIV, then a lad of thirteen, appeared in a ballet of Benserade entitled *Cassandra*.

This was the first of many in which the King took part until, at the age of thirty, he withdrew from the stage and gave his farewell performance in the ballet of *Flora* in 1669.

Louis XIV was to become more than a mere participant in Ballet, he was to become in effect the founder of modern Ballet as seen on the stage ; for it was he, patron of all the arts, who established the first Royal Academy of Dance and Music, to the existence and encouragement of which the subsequent development of both arts is largely due.

Most of the ballets produced during Louis' reign were either the main object of, or supplement to, superb fêtes given at Versailles, or in the various ducal palaces. Contemporary chroniclers have described those which Fouquet, the Comptroller of Finances, offered to Louis XIV, and, as a sidelight on the Comptroller's magnificent extravagance, the following is of interest.

The King left Fontainebleau one evening in September, 1660, with his entire Court, in order to have supper at the castle of Vaux-le-Vicomte. The route, five leagues long, was illuminated with waxen torches ; and booths, put up at intervals, were laden with all kinds of refreshment for the travellers.

The castle, blazing with light, was like a fairy palace. A magnificently furnished suite was set apart for His Majesty, and the Court was put up in the Comptroller's house. A feature of the room in which the King was to have supper was an immense sideboard, laden with gold and silver plate, with a fountain playing in the middle. A splendid banquet was served, and a band,

placed in a gallery, discoursed soft music. Numerous other tables were set out for the Court ; and the whole of the King's guard, even to the famous livery servants, were entertained royally throughout the two days of the fête.

After supper the King took a walk by a lake, the shores of which were decorated with orange trees, lemon trees, and pomegranates, planted in gilded tubs, the fruit being available to all who wanted any. Thousands of torches diffused a brilliant light. A theatre, built in the middle of the lake, offered yet further entertainment in a representation of *The Triumph of Venus*, a ballet of a new kind, in which tritons and nereids, having swum about in the waves, afterwards proceeded to sing eulogies of King Louis. All the best musicians of Paris had been added to the King's orchestra, and they were hidden behind the scenery of the theatre and in the neighbouring thickets.

On the following day there was a Royal hunt, with tables served at various points. There was fishing in the lake, from which a net brought in enormous fish ; there was a play, then a ball, and finally fireworks ; not to mention the sumptuous and delicate fare and exquisite wines and liqueurs provided on the same unlimited scale of extravagance.

On the first day Louis, whilst admiring the gardens and park from his window, had remarked on its beauty and added that the view would be lovelier still if it were not shut in by a wood of tall trees that he pointed out. Next morning Fouquet drew the King to the same window, and led the conversation in such a way that Louis might repeat the remark he had made the evening before.

“ Sire, since that wood has the misfortune to displease you, it shall immediately fall.”

Then at a given signal the forest disappeared with a crash as if by magic, and the Royal eye could see to the horizon. Sawn through during the night, and attached to ropes that a hidden army of peasants all pulled at the same moment, the trees fell at Fouquet's command.

All this magnificence astonished the courtiers, but served also to arouse considerable suspicion, and the King's brother drily remarked that the name of the castle should rather be *Vol-le-Roi* than *Vaux-le-Vicomte*! This fête, an act of homage as imprudent as it was ambitious, hastened the downfall of the artful Comptroller, and from that day Fouquet's doom was assured.

Among the various ballets of this period in which Louis XIV himself took part, the more notable were *Le Triomphe de Bacchus*, *Le Temps*, *Les Plaisirs*, *L'Amour Malade*, *La Raillerie*, *L'Impatience* and *Les Amours Déguisés*, as well as some of the *comédie-ballets* of Molière, such as *Le Cid*, *La Pastorale Comique*, and others.

Louis represented only the more exalted characters, such as Jupiter, Neptune, Apollo ; though on occasion, to display the variety of his talent, he essayed an experiment in *le genre bouffonesque*. Among the entrées in the *Triomphe de Bacchus*, for instance, there was one for some *filous, traineurs d'épée, sortant de palais de Silène, échauffés par le vin* ; and the King, playing the rôle of one of the "filous," sang the following stanza :

" Dans le metier qui nous occupe  
Nos sentiments sont assez beaux,  
Car nous prisons plus une jupe  
Que nous ne ferions vingt manteaux."

The Duc Mercour, the Marquis de Montglas, the Messieurs Sanguin and Lachesnaye, garbed as attendants on Bacchus, addressed the following verses to the ladies of the Court, and the author had carefully indicated that they were to be spoken to the "demoiselles" :

" Il n'est pas mal aisé d'acquérir nos offices,  
Et pour y parvenir le chemin en est doux ;  
Mais vous ne sauriez mieux vous addresses qu'à nous,  
Si vous voulez apprendre à devenir nourrices."

The members of His Majesty's Ballet, if they were not expert ballet-dancers, could at least give ample proof of their nobility. Louis XIV counted marquises

and marchionesses, dukes and duchesses, even princes and princesses and queens among his dancing subjects.

It was in 1661 that the King actually founded his Royal Academy of Dancing. A room in the Louvre was assigned to this learned society, which, however, preferred to gilded ceilings the smoky walls of an inn having for its sign "The Wooden Sword," where the members of the new Academy met together ; and it was here that the interests of the kingdom of the *rigaudon* and the minuet were regulated, and elections were held. Then, without breaking up the session, without even leaving their academic chairs, dinner was served to the members on the table where each had just cast his vote. A table-cloth covered the green cloth ; the bottle followed the inkhorn ; supper replaced the ballot-box ; and the assembly drank long draughts to the health of the new member of the *Académie de la Danse*.

The first Letters Patent for the foundation of the Dancing Academy, dated 1661, read curiously. In the preamble, for instance, the King thus expressed himself :

" Although the art of dancing has always been recognised as one of the most honourable, and the most necessary for the training of the body, to give it the first and most natural foundations for all kinds of exercises and, amongst others, to those of arms ; and as it is, consequently, one of the most useful to our nobility and others who have the honour of approaching us, not only in times of war in our armies, but also in times of peace, in the performance of our ballets, nevertheless, during the disorder of the last wars, there have been introduced into the said art, as in all others, a great number of abuses likely to bring them to irretrievable ruin.

" Many ignorant people have tried to disfigure the dance and to spoil it, as exhibited in the personal appearance of the majority of people of quality : so that we see few among those of our Court and Suite who would be able to take part in our ballets, whatever scheme we drew up to attract them thereto. It being necessary, therefore, to provide for this, and wishing to re-establish





the said art in its perfection, and to increase it as much as possible, we deemed it opportune to establish in our good town of Paris a Royal Academy of Dancing, comprising thirteen of the most experienced men in the said art, to wit :

MM. Galant du Désert, dancing-master to the Queen ;  
Prévôt, dancing-master to the King ;  
Jean Renaud, dancing-master to His Majesty's brother ;  
Guillaume Raynal, dancing-master to the Dauphin ;  
Nicolas de Lorges ;  
Guillaume Renaud ;  
Jean Picquet ;  
Florent Galant du Désert ;  
Jean de Grigny."

These, let us note, are the names of the patriarchs of the French dance.

Eight years later, in 1669, the Abbé Perrin (who was official introducer of ambassadors to Gaston, Duc d'Orléans), having obtained exclusive rights from the King, went into theatrical management, taking as his colleagues the Marquis de Sourdeac to direct the scenic and mechanical effects, and the composer, Cambert, to supply the music. A certain Monsieur Champeron advanced the money, and on March 28th, 1671, *Pomone*, a pastoral in five acts, words by Perrin, music by Cambert, dances by Beauchamps, was produced at the Abbé's theatre in the Rue Mazarine.

The production was poor, but this did not prevent the house being crowded for eight months, so that at the end of this period, M. Perrin drew thirty thousand francs as his share : but the various members of the little syndicate disagreed when it came to sharing out.

Then the composer Lully profited by their disputes, cleared out the Abbé and his partners, and started again in a disused tennis court known as the *Bel Air*, situated in the Rue de Vaugirard, near the Luxembourg. He had as colleagues Quinault for the poetic libretti, and an

Italian named Vigarani for the mechanical effects, one of the cleverest stage managers in Europe at the time. When Molière died in the following year the hall of the Palais-Royal, which he had occupied, was given to Lully.

Louis XIV, in his later Letters Patent dated 1672, concerning the non-forfeiture of nobility of ladies and nobles who were prepared to figure in the scene at the Opera, authorises his "faithful and well-beloved Jean-Baptiste Lully to add to the Royal Academy of Music and Dancing, instituted by these presents, a school suitable to educate pupils as much for dancing as for singing, and also to train bands of violins and other instruments."

The Sun-King, in fact, exerted himself to such effect that he actually superintended, and wrote with his own hand the budget of the *corps de ballet* at the opera, as seen in a subsequent Order which is dated January 11th, 1713.

The male dancers were twelve in number. Their united salaries amounted to 8,400 francs ; two of them had 1,000 francs ; four, 800 francs ; four, 600 francs ; and two others, 400 francs. The ten women dancers earned together 5,400 francs ; the two principals had 900 francs ; the four seconds had 500 francs ; the four last, 400 francs ; and there were, besides, a master of the dancing-room at 500 francs ; a composer of ballets at 1,500 francs ; a designer at 1,200 francs ; and a master-tailor at 800 francs.

The King busied himself also with the author's royalities, and it must be confessed that he showed himself more generous, proportionately, towards the authors than towards the artists. According to a rate fixed by him, a hundred and twenty francs were paid for a ballet for each of the first ten performances, and sixty francs for each subsequent performance.

For some time the French Opera had been ungraced by the feminine form, though women took part in the performances at some of the minor theatres, such as the famous "Theatres of the Fair" in Paris. For the enter-

tainment of the more exalted sections of Society the more exalted ladies themselves performed ; at Court, however, *not* on the public stage, where, as in our own theatre in Elizabethan times, youths played the women's rôles.

Such was the case in the production of a ballet by Lulli and Desbrosses in 1672, *Les Fêtes de l'Amour et de Bacchus*, in which M. le Duc de Monmouth, M. le Duc de Villeroy, M. le Marquis de Rassen and M. Legrand executed various dances "supported" by Beauchamps, M. André, Favier and Lapierre, professional male dancers at the Opera.

Of these the leader was Beauchamps, director of the Royal Academy of Dancing, composer of (and superintendent of) the Court Ballets of Louis XIV in 1661, and appointed *maître des ballets* to the Academy in 1671. He danced with the King in the entertainments at Court, and though La Bruyère says of him, "*qu'il j'étais les jambes en avant, et faisait un tour en l'air avant que de retomber à terre*," showing that even in those days the public loved "sensation," Beauchamps was ordinarily a grave and dignified executant.

Beauchamps was also one of the first experimentalists in the direction of inventing a system of choreography, or the writing down of dances in a kind of shorthand, so that once designed a dance should never be lost, but could be read and repeated as easily as a piece of music. In this he was following on the track of Arbeau ; but his system was different, and, if not ideal, at least it paved the way to better.

Pécourt, who next became "*premier danseur et maître des ballets de l'Opéra*," made his *début* in 1672. His style was what is known as "*demi-caractère*" ; and he is said to have had notable effect on the ladies of his day, his amazing lightness fairly turning their heads.

Blondi, a nephew of Beauchamps ; Balon, who became *maître à danser* to Louis XIV ; Baudiery-Laval, a nephew of Balon, who succeeded his uncle as dancing-master to the Royal Family and *maître des ballets* at Court ; Michel-Jean Baudiery-Laval, a son of the last

named, who was not only a *maitre à danser*, but is said to have been the first stage-manager to have used lycopodium powder as a means of producing stage lightning ; these were some of the lesser stars of the end of the seventeenth, and beginning of the eighteenth centuries in France. They were presently to be followed by Louis-Pierre Dupré, who came to be known as *Le Grand Dupré*, and who surpassed all his forerunners by the grace and the dignity of his dancing, and the *noblesse* of his poses.

To hark back, however, to 1672, when there were still only men to play the women's parts. The reason for the dearth of feminine stars was quite simple ; the Academy was in its infancy. There were as yet no properly qualified professional *danseuses* ; and the courtly amateurs were too courtly—and too much amateurs—to appear to advantage on the stage. The Academy came to alter all that. It revived a genuine interest in dancing as an art worthy of serious study ; and Lulli, a dancing musician, did the rest ; for it was his opera-ballet, *Le Triomphe de L'Amour*, produced on May 16th, 1681, which first brought the professional woman dancer on to the French stage.

Various high ladies of the Court, the Dauphine, la Princesse de Conti, Mlle de Nantes and others, formed a useful background ; but the entire feminine staff of the dancing-school numbered only four—namely, Mlle Lafontaine, Mlle Le Peintre, Mlle Feron and Mlle Roland, the first named being the leader, the *première des premières danseuses*, who was accorded the title so often granted to successive *premières* since then, of *Reine de la Danse*.

That admirable historian of French opera, Castil-Blaze, has given excellent account of the state of affairs towards the end of the seventeenth century.

“ The lack of good dancers,” he says, “ was doubtless an obstacle in the way of the introduction of grand ballet at the Royal Academy. *Les Fêtes de l'Amour et de Bacchus*, *Le Triomphe de l'Amour*, and all productions of the same kind commonly called at that time ‘ ballets,’ were really nothing less than operas treated in such a way as

to give a little more freedom for the introduction of dances, the singing being nevertheless still the main object. Pécourt, who made his *début* in *Cadmus*, shared the honours of the dance with Beauchamps, with Dolivet, a capital mime, and another good dancer named L'Etang. The company of singers also included some notable personalities, and though the functions of singer and dancer were usually kept pretty well apart, one actress, Mlle Desmatins, managed, in the opera of *Perseus*, to score a double success as singer and dancer, a very unusual combination, as it is seldom indeed that a dancer is good for much as a vocalist. Vigarani, an Italian theatrical *machiniste* of great talent, had charge of the theatres of the Court ; and another Italian, Rivani, and Francis Berein, fulfilled a similar function with regard to the Opera."

Italian ballets, executed by Italian dancers, were among the favourite diversions of the French Court towards the end of the seventeenth and beginning of the eighteenth centuries, which accounts for the frequency with which they appear in the paintings of Watteau, Lancret and other artists of the period. That of *L'Impatience* had been partly translated into French in order that Louis XIV might take part in it, and was, like all the comedy ballets of the time, a series of detached scenes independent of each other, depicting the various amusing examples of Impatience which one usually finds in other people ! But the taste for Italian Ballet did not interfere with the development of the native type, which received the encouragement of the nobility and increasing support on the professional and technical side, for authors, musicians and dancers were all beginning to realise Ballet as a form of art which had too long been neglected, and one worthy of their attention.

*Le Temp de la Paix*, represented at Fontainebleau, was given by the *corps de ballet* of the newly founded *Académie Royale*, illustrious dancers and scions of the nobility all taking their share in the production. The women dancers from the theatre, who mingled with the

princesses and ladies of the Court, were termed *femmes pantomimes*, in order to distinguish them from the titled *amateurs*, and among the latter one finds the Princesse de Conti, the Duchesse de Bourbon, and such good old names as Mlle de Blois, D'Armagnac, de Brienne, D'Uzés, D'Estrées ; on the theatrical side such artists as Hardouin, Thevenard, and the amazing Mlle de Maupin, heroine of a hundred wild and questionable adventures, were among the more illustrious of the singers ; while Balon, already named, won applause for the energy and vivacity of his dance, and Mlle Subligny was equally admired for her dignity and grace.

## CHAPTER XII

### MIME, ITALIAN COMEDY AND ENGLISH PANTOMIME

MENTION of Subligny recalls the interesting fact that during the reigns of Louis XIV and Louis XV of France there was a considerable importation of French and Italian actors, singers, dancers and musicians into England ; and we all know the amusing complaints in *The Spectator* and other journals of the period against the craze for Italian opera.

A little earlier, the composer Cambert, who had been Director of the King's Music to the Court of Louis XIV and, after breaking fresh ground in French opera, was also one of the first to experiment with Ballet, had become attached to the English Court of our own Charles II in 1677.

Lulli, Desmarests, Campra, Rebel, Destouches, Mouret and Montclair are also names of leading French composers of Opera and Ballet well known to students of the period, their greatest successor in the eighteenth century being Rameau, who was composer of nearly a score of notable ballets. Thus, through her musicians and her dancers, France began, during the opening years of the eighteenth century, to take the lead in the development of Ballet.

As to the French dancers, Nivelon was one of the more famous male dancers who visited London towards the end of the seventeenth century, and had considerable success ; as did Mlle Subligny herself, who came to London with influential introductions to John Locke, of all people in the world, author of the famous but soporific *Essay on the Human Understanding*, which, however, omits any reference to that of the charming French dancer.

It can well be imagined that the introduction of women to the French stage made for improvement in many directions besides access of grace. The little rivalries and successes of women dancers induced a general spirit of emulation that had its effect in the development of dance *technique*.

Following on the introduction of women dancers, we come to another interesting point in the history of the Dance and Ballet ; for, once again, it was due to a woman that we had the invention, or rather, the revival—for it had not been seen since the days of Bathyllus and Pylades in Augustan Rome—of ballet-pantomime, a ballet acted entirely pantomimically, or in dumb-show. This was the happy idea of the learned and extravagant Duchesse du Maine, who gave an endless round of fêtes and entertainments at her residence at Scéaux ; but among those presented at her private theatre the ever-resourceful Duchesse never offered her guests a greater novelty than this she now produced.

Day and night, and especially night, her friends had been requisitioned to invent or take part in ingenious amusements ; sleep was banished from her exigent little Court. Dialogues, *proverbes*, “ literary lotteries,” songs and comedies, had been turned out without cessation as from a literary factory. Always it had been “ words, words, words,” and play on words. Now, for the first time for centuries—as they *were*, in fact, and must certainly have *seemed* to the Duchesse’s house-parties—there was to be silence on the stage at Scéaux !

Having chosen the last scene of the fourth act of Corneille’s *Les Horaces*, the Duchesse commissioned the composer Mouret to set it to music as if it were to be sung. The words were then ignored, the music was played by an orchestra, and two well-known dancers of the Royal Academy, M. Balon and Mlle Prévôt, mutely *mimed* the actions and emotions of the leading characters, so dramatically and with such intensity of feeling that, it is said, both they and their audience were moved at times to tears !

Françoise Prévôt, or Prévost, was born about 1680, made her *début* at the age of eighteen, and, when Subligny retired in 1705, took her place as *première danseuse*. For nearly thirty years she was the joy of all frequenters of the Opera, for her grace and lightness of style, until she retired in 1730 ; and she died eleven years after.

Among the more famous of her pupils were Marie Sallé and Marie-Anne de Cupis de Camargo, of both of whom there will be more to say in due course. Meanwhile, among the dances mainly in vogue during Prévôt's earlier period were the *courantes*, *allemandes*, *gigues*, *contredanses*; and in her later years, *chaconnes*, *passacailles* and *passepieds*; and for her dancing of the last Prévôt was especially famed.

In the preface to his *Maître à Danse*, published four years after the dancer's retirement, Rameau describes her in the following terms : " Dans une seule de ses danses sont renfermés toutes les règles qui, après de longues méditations, nous pouvons donner sur notre art ; et elle les met en pratique avec tant de grâce, tant de justesse, tant de légèrité, tant de précision, qu'elle peut-être regardée comme un prodige dans ce genre."

Again, Noverre, in his *Lettres sur la Danse*, published later, makes graceful reference to Prévôt, in recalling his impressions of famous dancers whom he had seen in earlier years, and gives us, too, an interesting criticism of the methods of the eighteenth-century composers of Ballet. " La plupart de compositeurs," he says, " suivent les vieilles rubriques de l'opéra. Ils font des *passepieds*, parceque Mdlle Prévôt les courait avec élégance ; des *musettes*, parceque Mdlle Sallé et M. Dumoulin les dansaient avec autant de grâce que de volupté ; des *tambourins*, parceque c'était le genre ou Mdlle de Camargo excellait ; des *chaconnes* et des *passacailles*, parceque le célèbre Dupré c'était fixé à ces mouvements qui s'ajoutaient à son gout, à son genre, à la noblesse de sa taille. Mais tous ses excellents sujets n'y sont plus ; ils ont été remplacés, et au delà dans ces parties, et ne le seront peut-être jamais des autres. . . ."

Noverre cannot actually have seen Prévôt, since he was only born in 1727, and she retired in 1730 ; but he records an interesting tradition in thus complaining that the greater number of the composers of his time still followed the older canon of the opera, and composed

*passepieds* because “ Mdlle Prévôt les courait ” ; for it shows that the technique of the dance had already begun to outgrow that of the composer.

Musicians were following in their forerunner’s tracks ; dancers were advancing on the road of invention. Indeed, we shall see that this was so when we come to consider the differences between the style of Prévôt and that of her successors. For the moment it suffices to record that Prévôt, star of the French Opera from about 1700 to 1730, was famous for her elegance, her “ grace,” “ lightness,” and “ precision ” as revealed in the comparatively slow dances of her period, when the technique was obviously not immature, or Rameau could not have noted such qualities in her dancing, but evidently had not yet developed in the direction of speed, or of *tours de force*, such as some of the later dancers were to exhibit. The *passepied*, of which an old French dancer-poet wrote :

“ Le léger passepied doit voler terre-à-terre,”

was a dance in three-four time, a species of minuet, performed as the poet records, “ terre-à-terre,” hence Noverre’s description : “ Mdlle Prévôt les courait avec élégance.”

It is necessary for a while to turn aside (even to hark back a little, perhaps, since, in dealing with a period of transition, there must be several threads to track and gather up), and to glance at another phase of theatrical history than that of the *première danseuse* and the august Royal Opera, namely, those less exalted, and more popular, theatres, which often proved as ante-chambers to the greater stage, and to Royal favour, to wit—the theatre of the Italian Comedy, and the Theatres of the Fair.

Humanity, like history, repeats itself in its recurring moods. Towards the end of last century London playgoers became enthusiastic over what was a comparatively new thing at that period, the production of that delightful play without words, MM. Carré and Wormser’s *L’Enfant Prodigue*, brilliantly acted by a cast headed by

Mlle Jane May as Pierrot, with Mlle Zanfretta as Pierette.

About two thousand years ago the playgoers of ancient Rome were crazy about what was *then* thought to be a really new thing—Pantomime, acting without words ; and, as we have seen in an earlier chapter, two pantomimists, Bathyllus and Pylades, then set a standard in mimetic representation never achieved before. The two Roman actors were “dancers,” but it was really as brilliant pantomimists that they became famous.

The modern ballet-dancer knows, or should know, that dancing without the ability to mime is not enough to win the fame of a Taglioni, Pavlova, Genée, or Karsavina, in ballet. In opera a voice of the loveliest tone, together with a trained technical excellence in the use of it, has not the power to move the hearers if *expression* is lacking. *It is the art of the mime which gives expression and significance to the art of the dancer* : and it was as dancer-mimes that Pylades and Bathyllus had moved their audience to such admiration.

It is, of course, a pretence, this doing without words ; a pretence because we cannot do without words. We may see a “wordless” play, but behind the dumb-show there are still the words. It is so in life. Behind *all* things is—the Word ; things are only representative of thoughts ; and thoughts are inconceivable, but not inexpressible, without words. We may not always speak with tongue and voice ; but, if we have the impulse to speak, the instrument matters not, and we may “speak” with our hands. So doing, a look or gesture becomes a word ; a series of gestures or movements—a sentence.

Now when, in ancient Roman days, the ordinary spoken comedy had merged, first into a sort of musical comedy and then, at the dawn of the Christian era, into unspoken comedy or pantomime ; and when, further, the Greek plays and Greek and Latin myths were drawn upon as subjects for pantomime, some of the original characters were retained and others incorporated in the general

make-up of the purely wordless play as this form of entertainment became increasingly popular.

The *spoken* comedy of ancient Rome becoming superseded, first by pantomimes and, secondly, by circuses, seemed to languish with the fall of the Empire itself, until the world's reawakening, in the later Middle Ages, to the wonders of the classic past. But it is more than probable that this *un-spoken* comedy, or pantomime, together with dancing, did *not* wholly die. In Sicily and Southern Italy, more especially, the art would have survived ; for expressive pantomime was always as much a means of speech among the Southern Latins as verbal language itself.

In the old Latin comedy the same set of characters had often been made to appear in other guises, and in various comic situations. "Maccus," for instance, though still called so, would appear at one time as an old maid, at another as a raw soldier : "Pappus" would be a doting old husband, or perhaps a father whose daughter was abducted ; and he was usually outwitted whatsoever situation he was in. These and other such types, and this custom of making each a kind of "quick-change" artist, also survived.

In Italy, as time went by, various local types were added to the original cast of the pantomime. The old man would be a Venetian ; the Doctor, from Bologna, famous for its University and—poisons ; the Clown would be a peasant-servant from Bergamo ; the braggart soldier, a "Capitan," would be from Spain ; sometimes they would each speak in their own particular dialect, ironic fun being made thereof.

Throughout the fifteen, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the fame of the Italian comedians spread throughout the world. Troupes found their way to Paris and London, and no slight traces of their influence are to be found in Shakespeare and in Molière. Pre-Shakespearean comedy in England was often impromptu and pantomimic ; and the actors worked much as the Italian players had always done.

The famous Italian comedian, Flaminio Scala, printed

in 1611 a book of plays performed by his company. *There was no dialogue!* They were what we know as "scene plots," or, to use the French term, "*canevas*." Merely an outline of the play was given, the entrance, exits, "business," written on canvas and hung up in the wings as a reminder to the actors who "gagged" the play throughout, each usually introducing his own stock tricks or silent "business" (*lazzi* was the Italian word) as the play proceeded.

In one of Scala's "plots" we find a Pantaloone, a Doctor, a Captain (Shakespeare's "Pistol"), and a Pedrolino, later to become better known to us, after various changes of spirit, as Pierrot.

In a little volume I have, *Le Théâtre Italien*, by the famous actor, Evariste Gherardi (published 1695), the author explains that "the reader must not expect to find in this book entire comedies, because the Italian plays *could not be printed*, for the simple reason that *the players learn nothing by rote*, and it suffices for them merely to have seen the subject of the comedy a moment before stepping on the stage." He says that "the charm of the pieces is inseparable from the action, and their success depends wholly on the actors, who *play from imagination rather than from memory, and compose their comedy while playing.*"

Among the titles of the plays we find *Arlequin, Emperor in the Moon : Colombine, Advocate : Arlequin Proteus : The Cause of Woman : Divorce* : and *Arlequin, Man of Fortune*. In most we find Arlequin assuming various disguises, "*Arlequin déguisé en Baron*," "*Arlequin déguisé en Comtesse*," being, for instance, among stage directions to *The Cause of Woman*.

By the early eighteenth century the regular leading male characters had become "Arlequin," "Pantaloone," "Punchinello," the "Doctor," the "Captain," "Scaramouch," "Scapin," "Leandre" and "Mezzetin"; and women had become incorporated in the generally enlarged cast, the leading characters usually being called "Isabelle," "Octavie" and "Colombine."

Reference has already been made to the Duchesse de

Maine, who, in 1708, revived the art of pure pantomime by producing an act of Corneille's *Les Horaces*, performed entirely in dumb show by the dancer-mimes, Mdlle Prévôt and Monsieur Balon, to music by Mouret.

Shortly after, Nivelon and other dancers who were also mimes, such as Sallé, began to come to London ; and in the early eighteenth century was seen the birth of the first real English *pantomime*, which bore some resemblance to that of ancient Rome, owed something to the Italian comedy and to the more recent French theatre, with certain new ideas of its own—especially in the way of costume and elaborate staging. This was due to the enterprise of a London theatrical manager, John Rich.

By Rich's time "Arlequin" had become the all-important character of the French comedy stage ; and he followed a then recent custom (also the ancient Latin custom) of placing one character in various sets of circumstances.

His first production at the Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre in 1717 was *Harlequin Sorcerer*, which was followed by several others, with Harlequin as the hero. Their form was always much the same. A serious, classic or fabulous story, perhaps one from Ovid, was the basis of the work ; while between the serious scenes, and partly woven into them, ran a lighter story, consisting mainly of Harlequin's courtship of Columbine, with interference from other characters, on whom, in turn, Harlequin played tricks with his magic wand.

Rich played Harlequin and made him dumb, for the simple reason that, though a clever actor, he could not speak well enough for the stage. Thus he gave us once again the ancient classic art of "pantomime," which now became the true English "Harlequinade" ; and he taught his players of the other parts, Pantaloön, Pierrot, Clown, Columbine, an art of wordless acting equal to his own. He realised the value of fine mounting ; his productions were lavishly staged ; and almost invariably successful.

It would be interesting, of course, to trace in detail the history of Italian comedy and its influence on the



S'entraîne de son génie d'un autre bras  
Au beau printemps de la Grèce il suit les mythes  
Et conservant pour lui leur antique  
Grecque et lycique Pas aperçut à l'

JEAN-GEORGES NOVERRE

The famous 18th century *Maître de Ballet* and author of *'L'Art*



MILLE. SALLE.

Rival of Carmargo. A visitor to London, where she appeared in 1733 at Covent Garden in two classic ballets of her own composition, *Pygmalion* and *Bacchus et Ariane*.

French and English stage, but space permits only brief consideration of the subject here. Certain modern scholars hold the doubtful view that it was *not* derived from the classic stage at all, but was a spontaneous growth of fifteenth-century Italy. Another view is, that there was an unbroken thread of tradition from Greece, through Sicily and the Greek settlements in Southern Italy and France, and that when the *Commedia dell' Arte* attained its great vogue in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, spreading through Italy, and thence through Western Europe, the beauty and complexity of its texture was due to the numerous strands that had been gathered up from various localities in the progress of years.

Yet another possibility is, that this central idea of pantomime, or dumb acting, may merely have recurred again and again through the centuries, seemingly as a "new" idea, without direct impulse from tradition. But whatsoever diverse theories students may hold, the fact remains that it *was* known in classic days ; that the form of it which we know under the Italian title of the *Commedia dell' Arte* flourished in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries ; and that it certainly had some influence on the French and English stage, literature and art, and also on the evolution of Ballet.

The Duchesse du Maine in her pantomime production of Corneille's *Les Horaces* was deliberately harking back to a form of entertainment which she believed had held the classic stage ; and the production was not without effect on the history of Ballet. The appearance of Italian pantomime actors in Paris exerted yet further influence, not only on the stage, but on contemporary art and literature.

Look at some of the pictures of Watteau, Lancret and Fragonard, and you will discover in them the actual types of the seventeenth and eighteenth century Italian comedy. Turn to the scores of the opera-ballets of the early eighteenth century, and, more often than not, you will note that the Italian comedians were introduced ; just as, in modern times, Russian dancers have



## CHAPTER XIII

### *ITALIAN PLAYERS AND THE "THEATRES OF THE FAIRS"*

**E**VEN some of the French critics seem hardly to have realised the extent to which French art of the early eighteenth century was influenced by the contemporary stage. That it *was* influenced to the extent of introducing the types of Italian comedy is obvious enough ; one has only to glance at Watteau's "*L'Amour au Théâtre Italien*" to see that ; but the fact that several of Watteau's pictures were derived from actual ballets seen on the French stage, seems to have been overlooked, and their value to dance-students ignored.

One of the earlier works attributed to Watteau is a picture representing the "*Departure of the Italian Comedians*." The engraving of it by L. Jacob, in the Jullienne collection of engravings from Watteau's works, gives the date of the incident as 1697. Watteau, however, did not arrive from Valenciennes to take up his abode in Paris until after 1702, when he came to reside and work with Claude Gillot, the engraver. So this seems to be either a mistake on Jullienne's part, or the picture is not by Watteau, but is worked up from sketches by Gillot, or some other person, who was an eye-witness of the incident.

Let us turn aside for a moment from this minor problem and consider who, exactly, were these Italian comedians. From 1570, when Catherine de Medici invited a company of Italian players to Paris and onwards, there were several troupes arriving from time to time, under Court patronage ! One of the earliest of importance came in 1576, and were known as *Gli Gelosi* or *Les Jaloux*, so called from the fact that they achieved their success first in a comedy of that name, *Gli Gelosi*.

In 1660, the famous Fiorelli troupe was installed at the Palais Royale, where they played alternately with Molière's company, and received the title of *Commediens du Roi de la troupe Italienne* ; and, subsequently, it was established, by order of the Dauphin, that the Italian

comedy troupe should always be composed of twelve members, four women and eight men, made up as follows : two women for "serious *rôles*" and two for the comic ; two men for lovers, and two for comic parts ; two *pour conduire l'intrigue* ; and two to play fathers and old men generally. These kept the traditional names respectively of Isabelle, Eularia ; Columbine, Marinette ; Octave, Cinthio ; Scaramouche, Arlequin ; Mezzetin, Pascariel ; Pantalon and the Doctor.

In 1697 the Italian comedians (who by now had begun to develop from the *Commedia dell' Arte*, or purely improvised and largely mimed play of an earlier period, into a more or less written "literary" comedy) had the audacity to produce, under the title of *La Fausse Prude*, an adaptation based on a contemporary novel which had attacked the King's mistress, Madame de Maintenon. For this they were banished, and were not recalled to Royal favour until 1716.

Hence the problem of deciding Watteau's connection with the painting of an incident that occurred in 1697, five years before he could possibly have reached Paris ; and also of "placing" the rest of his avowedly theatrical pictures, when apparently the Italian comedians were not to be seen *until* 1716, thus giving Watteau only five years before his death, in 1721, to account for his fairly extensive collection of works dealing expressly with these stage types.

Speaking of the period shortly after Watteau arrived in Paris, one French critic has declared : "Indeed, during these early years Watteau could have had no opportunity of studying the Italian comedy, otherwise than through the works of his new preceptor and friend" : this "preceptor and friend" being, of course, Gillot, by whose enthusiasm for the stage Antoine's own was unquestionably awakened. The same writer goes on to say : "It can hardly be doubted that from him—and not, as legend has it, from the stage itself—Watteau obtained his first peep into the strange realms of the *Commedia dell' Arte*."

The plain fact, however, is that, despite this earlier banishment of the Royal troupe of Italian comedians, there were many opportunities for Watteau to have enjoyed the productions of the *Commedia dell' Arte*, and to have been influenced throughout his Parisian life by that and by contemporary ballets.

From the time that he reached the city in 1702 until his death in 1721, there were certainly three such opportunities for stage influence, namely, the legitimate and royally patronised Comédie Française ; the Royal Opera and Ballet, then finding wings to soar ; and finally, the Theatres of the Fair, which, with their gay quarrel against authority, their reckless parodies and splendid spectacles, have been strangely neglected by Watteau's biographers as a contributory influence towards his choice of subjects.

Let us consider first the Parisian Theatres of the Fairs. The fairs themselves, of St. Germain and St. Laurent, were of ancient institution, and from early times they had their side-shows of tumblers, rope-dancers, trained animals, such as performing bears, monkeys and white mice ; as well as the "balladists" and marionettes. Towards the end of the seventeenth century each fair had one or more troupes of actors, often foreign and especially Italian, who played improvised pieces in dumb-show, as well as written farces, vaudevilles and parodies in Italian, French and sometimes a mixture of both languages. These troupes were quite apart from those which, from time to time, had been brought from Italy by the special invitation of the French Court.

It was the Royal troupe *only* that had been expelled in 1697 for its performance of *La Fausse Prude* ; and it was really their expulsion which aroused the "Theatres of the Fairs" to a new and more vigorous life.

The Fair of St. Germain was open from February 3rd to Easter Sunday ; the Fair of St. Laurent began at the end of June, and closed in October ; and for the greater part of the year there *were* established companies at the Theatres of the Fair ; i.e. from before 1702,

when Watteau came to Paris, until after 1721, the date of his death.

There was the troupe of Madame Jeanne Godefroy, widow of Maurice von der Beck, from 1694 to 1709; that of Christopher Selles, from 1701 to 1709; that of Louis Nivelon (our theatrical visitor to London), from 1707 to 1771; that of Saint-Edmé, from 1711 to 1718; and, most important of all, the Italian Company of Constantini, known as "Octave," from 1712 to 1716. Thus, from the time he arrived in Paris, Watteau could have seen—and doubtless did see—any of these companies.

The stage has from time to time been indebted to Watteau for costume and *décor*, but Watteau's debt to the Opera and to the Theatres of the Fair has thus hardly been considered sufficiently. Here is not the place to bring forward all the evidence that could be produced; and only a very brief indication of some of the leading possibilities can be given.

It is interesting, for instance, first to compare Watteau's picture of "Love in Italian Comedy" with the illustrations to Riccoboni's *Histoire du Théâtre Italien* which, though not published until six years after Watteau's death, may be regarded as a contemporary work, since it described the stage of his time.

These prints represent the various types of the Italian comedy as they were actually costumed; and, comparing them with the figures in Watteau's group, one sees, in their close resemblance, proof that the master was painting from things actually seen, and not merely some graceful creations of his own imagination as some to-day have been too apt to think.

One has only to pass in review a succession of Watteau's works, or reproductions thereof, to notice how very frequently, too, he repeats himself in matters of detail. In a general way, for instance, it is curious to note how often dancing and music are repeated in the course of his life's work. There are, however, more distinctive and more curious repetitions to note than obvious evidences of a merely general taste for music

and the dance ; namely, *the repetitions of figures or groups in particular positions*, and of "properties" and of details in *mise en scène*.

Watteau's work as a whole exhibits these frequent repetitions of certain *motifs* ; but they were never of something he cannot have seen in reality ; they were details of stage *décor* seen in contemporary productions. When, therefore, we find in works other than those avowedly theatrical a repetition of scenic details found in those dealing obviously with the theatre, it may be presumed that the direct influence of the contemporary stage upon his art was more extensive than some of his critics have supposed, and both, from the point of view of costume study, and, as providing hints for "period" ballets, it would certainly repay theatrical students to become more closely acquainted with the paintings of Watteau and his contemporary artists of the brush, as it would, indeed, to study also the paintings of other artists and other periods.

## CHAPTER XIV

### BALLET IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY LONDON

**I**N England it was not until near the end of Queen Anne's reign that stage-dancing began to come to its own ; and though the rage for pantomime, and John Rich's importation of French dancers in Anne's last year, were mainly responsible for this, one cannot help thinking that Steele and Addison's lively periodical, *The Spectator*, together with the works of John Weaver, also had particular effect in calling the attention of playgoers to the possibilities of dancing on the stage.

While there are four papers in *The Spectator* in which dancing as a social accomplishment is discussed, Steele, in one of them, makes the interesting suggestion that "it would be a great improvement, as well as embellishment to the theatre, if dancing were more regarded and taught to all the actors." Then another of his papers calls special attention to *An Essay towards an History of Dancing*, by John Weaver (published in 1712), who was also author of an interesting *History of Pantomimes* ; and, after all, *The Spectator* was not without influence on current taste in things theatrical.

Before the first number of *The Spectator* appeared, Addison had already made amusing reference to a dancing-master in one of his papers for *The Tatler*, dated 1709. He heads it as being written "From my own Apartment, October 31st," and goes on : "I was this morning awakened by a sudden shake of the house ; and as soon as I had got a little out of my consternation, I felt another, which was followed by two or three repetitions of the same convulsion. I got up as fast as possible, girt on my rapier, and snatched up my hat, when my landlady came up to me and told me that the gentlewoman of the next house begged me to step thither, for that a lodger she had taken in was run mad ; and she desired my advice ; as indeed everybody in the whole lane does upon important occasions," he slyly adds.

With delightful humour Addison proceeds to describe

his adventure at greater length than can be given here. Suffice it to say that he went in next door and upstairs, "with my hand upon the hilt of my rapier and approached this new lodger's door. I looked in at the keyhole and there I saw a well-made man look with great attention at a book and, on a sudden, jump into the air so high that his head almost touched the ceiling. He came down safe on his right foot, and again flew up, alighting on his left ; then looked again at his book and, holding out his right leg, put it into such a quivering motion that I thought he would have shaken it off."

Eventually he discovers that the lodger is a dancing-master, and, on asking to see the book he is studying, Addison "could not make anything of it." Whereupon the *maitre* explains that he had been *reading* a dance or two . . . which had been written by one who taught at an academy in France, adding the interesting comment "that now articulate motions, as well as sounds, were expressed by proper characters ; and that there is nothing so common as to communicate a dance by a letter." Ultimately, Addison begs him to practise in a room *on the ground floor* ; and returns to his own residence, "meditating on the various occupations of rational creatures."

To return, however, to the later publication, *The Spectator*, in which Addison was also assisted by Steele and other writers. In an early number a short notice introduced a quaint letter, purporting to be from "some substantial tradesmen about 'Change,'" in which the writer grows querulous over the way in which his daughter (who "has for some time been under the tuition of Monsieur Rigadoon, a dancing-master in the city") has been taught to behave at a ball to which he takes her.

With some of the dancing he sees the old man is delighted, as he is with the art in general, but presently he complains : "As the best institutions are liable to corruptions, so, sir, I must acquaint you that very great abuses are crept into this entertainment. I was amazed to see my girl handed by, and handing, young fellows

with so much familiarity" ; and he finds that fault especially with " a most impudent step called ' Setting '." Doubtless the worthy citizen was shocked by a dance that was quite innocuous, and only seemed to suggest a familiarity of behaviour unusual to his prim eyes, viewing a ballroom for the first time.

Almost the whole of another issue of *The Spectator* is taken up with a letter from John Weaver, whom Steele introduces with shrewd comments. One point that he makes recalls to mind the complaint of Arbeau's young friend, the law-student Capriol, who had grown dusty over his studies.

Speaking of dancing, Steele says : " I know a gentleman of great abilities who bewailed the want of this part of his education to the end of a very honourable life. He observed that there was not occasion for the common use of great talents ; that they are but seldom in demand ; and that these very great talents were often rendered useless to a man for want of small attainments." One can hardly consider dancing to-day as a " small attainment," whatever it may have been considered in the reign of Queen Anne. Weaver's own letter is too long to quote in its entirety, but I cannot refrain from giving at least the following, since, while speaking of his own work, he offers several peculiarly interesting glimpses as to the state of the art in 1712.

#### " MR. SPECTATOR,

" Since there are scarce any of the arts or sciences that have not been recommended to the world by the pens of some of the professors, masters, or lovers of them, whereby the usefulness, excellence and benefit arising from them, both as to the speculative and practical part, have been made public, to the great advantage and improvement of such arts and sciences ; *why should dancing, an art celebrated by the ancients in so extraordinary a manner, be totally neglected by the moderns, and left destitute of any pen to recommend its various excellencies and substantial merit to mankind?*

" *The low ebb to which dancing is now fallen* is altogether

owing to this silence. *The art is esteemed only as an amusing trifle*: it lies altogether uncultivated, and is unhappily fallen under the imputation of being illiterate and ‘mechanic.’ And as Terence, in one of his prologues, complains of the rope-dancers drawing all the spectators from his play; so may we well say that capering and tumbling is now preferred to, and *supplies the place of, just and regular dancing on our theatres*. It is, therefore, in my opinion, high time that someone should come to its assistance and relieve it from the many gross and growing errors that have crept into it, and overcast its real beauties; and to set dancing in its true light, would show the usefulness and elegance of it, with the pleasure and instruction produced from it; and also lay down some fundamental rules, that might so tend to the improvement of its professors, and information of the spectators, that the first might be the better enabled to perform, and the latter rendered more capable of judging what is (if there be anything) valuable in this art.

“ To encourage, therefore, some ingenious pen capable of so generous an undertaking, and in some measure to relieve dancing from the disadvantages it at present lies under, I, who teach to dance, have attempted a small treatise as an ‘Essay towards an History of Dancing’; in which I have enquired into its antiquity, origin and use, and shown what esteem the ancients had for it. I have likewise considered the nature and perfection of all its several parts, and how beneficial and delightful it is, both as a qualification and an exercise; and endeavoured to answer all objections that have been maliciously raised against it. I have proceeded to give an account of the particular dances of the Greeks and Romans, whether religious, war-like or civil; and taken particular notice of that part of dancing relating to the ancient stage in which the pantomimes had so great a share. Nor have I been wanting in giving an historical account of some particular masters excellent in that surprising art; after which I have advanced some observations on the modern dancing, both as to the stage, and that part of it so absolutely necessary for

the qualification of gentlemen and ladies ; and have concluded with some short remarks on the origin and progress of the character by which dances are writ down, and communicated to one master from another. *If some great genius after this world arise, and advance this art to that perfection it seems capable of receiving, what might not be expected from it."*

All modern dance-students will be particularly interested in the passages italicised, for they give us a significant glimpse as to the state of theatrical dancing in London during the reign of Anne ; a condition of things in marked contrast to Paris, where Louis XIV's *Académie Royale de la Danse* was beginning to bring forth rare and refreshing fruit, and Ballet was coming to be understood as a genuine work of art.

Weaver, at any rate, knew that the art was something more than an "amusing trifle" when he wrote almost prophetically : "If some great genius after this would arise and advance this art to that perfection it seems capable of receiving, what might not be expected from it." What would he have said had he lived to see the triumphs of Noverre, of Blasis, and of the Russian Ballet or Sadler's Wells of modern days ?

We have seen that the state of dancing in England was nothing to boast of in the early eighteenth century. We have seen that London had not yet what Paris had already enjoyed for some fifty years—State-aided Opera and Ballet. But the public appreciation of art was there all the same, and an astute manager of that day was as capable of realising, quite as well as any modern, that where there was no home supply it might be profitable to import foreign talent.

It seems strange, does it not, that there was not then apparently, any more than to-day, anyone shrewd enough to realise that since foreign talent could prove attractive to a dance and spectacle-loving public (had not the English proved their innate love of spectacle in Elizabethan times ?) it might be less expensive, and still more profitable, to encourage native talent ! But

that is our English way. We let the foreign artist discover England, and then discover the foreign artist. We never seem to discover ourselves. We shirk the shameful revelation that the English are really an artistic, an art-loving nation. But whatsoever the foreigner may have had, or have, against us, he can never accuse us of lack of enthusiasm, or of any indifference to such entertainment as he provides.

In the early eighteenth century—French actors, dancers and acrobats ; in the later eighteenth and mid-nineteenth—light French Opera (at the Criterion, Gaiety and Opera Comique) ; and in the twentieth—German Opera, and Russian Ballet ; these London has had, and more, and has always greeted them with generous praise and enthusiastic approval. Whatever may be said of the English as a nation slow to adopt new ideas, there is nothing small or hesitant about their adoption, and praise, of foreign art and artists ; and so it was that the delectable French dancer, Mlle Marie Sallé—one of the two chief pupils of the famous Prévôt—found a cordial welcome when she visited London in the reign of George I.

Mlle Sallé, born in 1707, was the daughter of one minor theatrical manager, niece of another, and made her first appearance at the age of eleven in an opéra-comique by Lesage—author of the lively *Gil Blas*—entitled *La Princesse de Carisme*, at the St. Laurent Fair in Paris in 1718. She spent the next few years in touring or, when not on tour, in playing at the Fair theatres in Paris.

*La Princesse de Carisme*, a romantic, satirical three-act musical comedy, dealt with the love affairs and adventures of a Persian prince and his boon companion—Arlequin. The music was charming, and so great was its success at the theatre of the St. Laurent Fair that it was put on at the Opera by Royal command.

By the year 1718, it will be remembered, old Christopher Rich had died, leaving his theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields to his son, John Rich, who made himself famous and increased his wealth by producing the first

pantomimes ever seen in London, productions mounted with all the attractions of gorgeous scenery and dresses, "grand mechanical effects," appropriate music and striking ballets ; the various acts of the spectacle being interspersed with a comic or serio-comic element, supplied by the eternal love affairs of Arlequin and Columbine.

This form of entertainment became so popular as to rival seriously the power of Drury Lane, mainly through Rich's enterprise in securing all the best opera-singers, dancers, acrobats and other performers from the Continent. In fact, he may fairly be described as London's earliest music-hall manager, for the entertainment provided at the Lincoln's Inn Fields theatre was much like that of a modern *vaudeville* house. It was thus that Rich came to engage Mlle Sallé and her brother, who made their first appearance here as dancers in an English comedy, *Love's Last Shift*, in October, 1725.

Next year they again appeared in London ; and in April, 1727, Mlle Sallé was given a complimentary benefit, in which she and her brother introduced some of their youthful pupils. In that same year she made her *début* at the Paris Opera, where she remained till, for some obscure reason, she broke away therefrom, and in October returned to London, once more under John Rich's management.

The reason for the break may have been that professional jealousy did not give her the place which her talents should have justified ; or it may have been over the question of costume reform, which was a matter of burning interest to some of the younger spirits in those days ; or, again, it may have been merely the result of managerial changes at the Opera in 1728. But whatsoever the reason, London gained what Paris had lost, and Sallé's greatest triumph here came at the end of 1733, when she made her first appearance at Covent Garden, following it up with still greater success in the spring of the following year, when she achieved a striking success in a classic ballet, *Pygmalion*, in more or less correct costume, instead of in the absurdly befrilled garb,



COSTUME IN THE CLASSICAL BALLET  
MUSICAL VARIETY  
Monsieur VISIERS  
Paris (1748)



GALTAN VESTRIS, OF "THE HOUSE OF VESTRIS"

Born 1729, died 1808. The most famous male dancer of the 18th century  
father of his equally famous successor, August Vestris.

with billowing panniers, powdered hair, masks, cuirasse, and plumed helmets, which were considered *de rigueur* on the stage at that absurdly artificial period.

Marie Sallé was not only a dancer of exquisite lightness and grace ; she was a woman of taste and sense, and, forestalling Noverre's fight on the same ground, had tried to bring about costume reform at the *Académie Royale*, only to find that those in authority were strong in authority, *and* convention ! She rejoiced, therefore, in a return to London, where she found more scope for the expression of her artistic ideas ; and the two ballets of her own composition, *Pygmalion* (February, 1734) and *Bacchus et Ariane* (March, 1734), were mounted with real regard for classic feeling. Her appearance in both caused a sensation. Royalty visited Covent Garden on the nights she danced ; the whole town flocked to see her ; and numerous duels were fought by ardent young gentlemen, who trod on each other's toes when jammed in the crowds that endeavoured to enter the theatre.

Mlle Sallé was a young woman of character. In a loose era she was cordially detested by her stage colleagues in Paris for her virtue ! Another aspect of her is revealed in a significant little anecdote. The great Handel, having admired her in Paris, offered her three thousand francs to appear at Covent Garden. Hearing of this, Porpora, Handel's great rival, and manager of the King's Theatre, Haymarket, promptly made her a bigger offer, and had the tact to suggest that she might accept it as she had not yet signed a contract with Handel. To which proposal Sallé replied with scorn, " And does my word, then, count for nothing ? "

London was delighted with the novelty of Mlle Sallé's ideas in the production of Ballet, and with the personal grace of the young dancer herself. One of the older historians of the Dance has described her in the following glowing terms : " Une figure noble, une belle taille, une grâce parfaite, une dance expressive et voluptueuse, tels étaient les avantages de Mademoiselle Sallé, la Taglioni de 1730."

As an influence in the revolution of the Dance and Ballet she might perhaps not incorrectly be described as the Isadora Duncan of her period. True, she did not dance barefoot, but she came to loosen the bonds of tradition, and to free the spirit of the Dance from the stiffening conventionalities which had grown up around Ballet as seen at the Paris Opera. In London she had greater freedom and greater success ; indeed, so triumphant was her final season that when she did return to Paris she was welcomed by Voltaire with the following verses :

“ Les Amours pleurant votre absence,  
Loin de vous s'étaient envolés ;  
Enfin les voilà rappelés.  
Dans le séjour de leur naissance.”

In yet another poem he pays tribute to her virtue in describing her thus :

“ De tous les coeurs et du sien la maîtresse,  
Elle alluma des feux qui lui sont inconnus.  
De Diane c'est la prêtresse  
Dansant sous les traits de Vénus.”

Later was to come a change of feeling, and the idealistic young dancer was to be attacked for the very virtues her adoring poets—for Voltaire was not the only one—had celebrated ; her austerity got on the Parisian nerves ! But if the Parisians had not quite appreciated her as they should, her return to Paris immediately after her London successes, at any rate, was triumphant ; her portrait was painted by Lancret ; and her every appearance was greeted with enthusiasm.

It is interesting to think that her personal dignity had won her the respect and her beautuous art the homage of London before her qualities came to be recognised in Paris. It is possibly just the suggestion of austerity about her performance that appealed to the London audience. She had poetic distinction above the average ; was an expressive mime ; and her dancing was marked by supreme refinement, a magnetic reserve, a strange

suggestion of pictured stillness, an exquisite simplicity and grace. She remained at the Opera for some years, retired therefrom in 1740, but made frequent appearances after at Versailles and at Fontainebleau, until a few years before her death in 1756.

## CHAPTER XV

*CAMARGO, 1710-1770*

**C**ONTEMPORARY accounts of Camargo's appearance differ, some praising her beauty, and others the reverse. It was a time when people took sides, and duelled for their opinions.

It is a curious fact that several famous dancers have been of questionable beauty—at least, as to face, and when in repose ; for it is another curious thing that no dancer ever did, or possibly ever could, look plain when dancing, that is, if dancing well. The animation or gentle grace of the dance, whether quick or slow, seems inevitably to confer a beauty that otherwise might not be apparent, which in itself would appear to suggest that in dancing, as in other arts and in life itself, it is the “spirit which quickeneth” ; and, where that sufficiently illuminates the body, what the body itself may otherwise be matters little.

But if some of her more jealous colleagues may have found Camargo too dark for their taste—“swarthy,” said some—we may in turn criticise her critics, and see for ourselves what she was like on going to view her portrait by Lancret in the Wallace Collection in Hertford House.

Marie-Anne Cuppi de Camargo was born at Brussels early in April, and baptised in the parish of St. Nicholas on the 15th of that month, in 1710. She was the daughter, and first child, of a gentleman who had “seen better days” ; and who, thanks to his daughter, was to see them again. At the time of her birth he was a teacher of music and dancing, and was employed by the Prince de Ligne. Through her father the little dancer claimed descent from an aristocratic Roman family which from time to time had given a bishop, an archbishop and a cardinal to Holy Church ; while on her mother’s side she was descended from an ancient Spanish family.

Romance was ever ready to find in the earliest years of a popular star predictions of future fame, and it is

probably only romance that tells how Camargo danced on hearing a violin played, when she was but six months old ! It is rather more certain that her first lessons were from her father, and that, by the time she was nearly ten, she did well enough under his tuition to deserve the patronage of the Princesse de Ligne, who met the expense of study under the then famous Mlle Prévôt. Even so, Camargo must have been remarkably precocious, for before she was eleven she had returned to Brussels sufficiently "finished" to achieve a remarkable success on her first appearance. An auspicious *début* was followed by an engagement at Rouen, but, through no fault of Marie-Anne be it said, the manager failed.

As the Camargo luck would have it, however, there was a new director at the *Académie Royale* in Paris, by name Francine, and from him the little dancer received the welcome chance of appearing at the Opera, where she made her Parisian *début* on May 5th, 1726, in *Les Caractères de la Danse*, and was hailed as a star.

The impressionable capital fairly lost its head over the youthful dancer, and soon every fashion—shoes, hats, fans, coiffures, everything—was "à la Camargo." Such a threatened eclipse of her own popularity made Prévôt—now about forty-six, and having been before the public over twenty years—furiously jealous. For the next year or so Marie-Anne's progress was made difficult by intrigue, and the young dancer had to find herself more than once relegated to the comparative obscurity of the "back row." Her chance came, though, when one of the famous male dancers, Dumoulin, for some reason failed to make his entry, and Camargo, in a sudden devil-may-care mood, taking up his cue, leapt forward and went through his dance with such dazzling brilliance, and amid such universal applause, that henceforth any suppression of the youthful artiste was impossible, and it was Prévôt, *not* Marie-Anne, who eventually had to go.

While Sallé—also a pupil of Prévôt—was winning fame in London, Camargo was taking Paris by storm and creating another of which she was temporarily the

unhappy centre. Furious at this second obtrusion on the public notice, Mlle Prévôt bitterly upbraided her pushing young pupil, refused to give her any more lessons, or to dance with her in an *entrée* in which the Duchesse de Berri had asked her to appear.

Blondi, a leading male dancer of the Opera, seeing Camargo in tears, said to her : "Leave this harsh and jealous mistress, who only seeks to mortify you. I will give you lessons, will compose the *entrée* which the Duchesse requires, and you shall dance in it." Thus under the careful direction of Blondi, the young dancer, then only sixteen, made rapid progress. She combined *noblesse* and brilliance of execution, with grace, lightness and a gaiety which was natural to her—on the stage. One who had seen her described her in the following terms : "C'était une femme d'esprit ; fort gaie sur la scène et fort triste à la ville ; qui n'était ni joli, ni bien faite, mais légère, et la légèreté était alors un mérite fort rare. Elle executait avec une extrême facilité la 'royale' et 'l'entrechat' coupé sans frottement . . ."

There was for a little time considerable rivalry between Sallé, Camargo, and a third young dancer, named Roland, of whose record history has been neglectful. But the rivalry was testified by an anonymous scribe whose verses I venture to translate as follows :

" Of Camargo, Roland, Sallé  
 The connoisseurs have much to say !  
 One holds 'tis Sallé's grace that tells,  
 And one—Roland in joy excels ;  
 But each is struck by the display  
 Of nimble steps and daring way  
 Of Camargo.

" Equal the balance 'twixt the three  
 But were I Paris, forced to choose,  
 Only I know I'd not refuse,  
 But crown the dance, sublime and free,  
 Of Camargo."

There was, too, the inevitable tribute from Voltaire, whose poem, apart from the tact with which he divides his favours between the rival stars, is of unusual interest,

since he gives a useful impression of their contrasted styles in apostrophising the dancers thus :

“ Ah ! Camargo, que vous êtes brillante !  
Mais que Sallé, grand dieux ! est ravissante !  
Que vos pas sont légers, et que les siens sont doux !  
Elle est inimitable, et vous êtes nouvelle ;  
Les nymphes sautent comme vous,  
Et les Grâces dansent comme elle.”

It is all safe enough praise, but when we separate the respective characteristics we find that he is only versifying current opinion—Camargo is “ brillante,” her steps are “ légers ”, and the “ *nouvelle* ” refers to the novelty of her steps, with the clever invention of which she delighted her audience. The nymphs, you observe, “ *sautent comme vous*,” an appropriate phrase for one whose *entrechats* amazed a generation to which such things were new. On the other hand, Sallé was “ *ravissante*,” her steps were “ *doux* ” ; she was “ *inimitable*,” and “ *les Grâces dansent comme elle*,” a point of special significance when we recall the historic distinction between the words *sautent* and *dansent*.

Rumour soon gave Camargo numerous lovers, but history does not record that she succumbed to their protestations. Duels may have been fought on her behalf ; but probably she was unaware that she was the cause ; and certainly she did not provoke them. *Was* she a pretty actress ? Setting aside the opinion of her feminine contemporaries, unbiased colleagues thought not. Yet painters such as Lancret, Vanloo and Pater sought for the honour of depicting her graceful figure, and her face ! As to actual features perhaps she was not faultlessly beautiful, but with that mingled French and Spanish blood, even if she were “ *swarthy*,” as some said, she must have been striking, full of fire and “ *temperamental*,” as we might say to-day. Much of her fascination must have been in expression, and certainly she had that quality which often makes a dancer—sheer joy in dancing.

Her style was noted by contemporaries as combining quickness with grace to a degree not previously achieved,

and she won special credit for her invention of new steps. Her improvisation of dances was remarkable, and it is important to note that she was the first to perform an *entrechat à quatre* which (only for the benefit of non-dancing readers) may be described as the step in which a dancer crosses her feet rapidly while in mid-air. This historic innovation took place in 1730, and she could make four crossings. Subsequently a Mlle Lany improved on this with *entrechat à six*; while to-day many a *danseuse* can achieve an "eight."

Another interesting point to note is that, until the advent of Camargo, the ballet skirt reached nearly, or quite to the ankles. She was the first to shorten it, not, of course, to the brevity one can only—on the grounds of charm—regret has been too often seen since, but to such degree as to enable the steps to be better seen, and the dancer to have greater freedom of movement. Her favourite dances were the *tambourin*, *gavotte* and *rigaudon*, or *rigadoon*, as it is known in English. But for all the shortening of the skirt and the rapidity of her steps, Marie-Anne was never accused from departing from grace and refinement of deportment.

A curious personal characteristic was that while on the stage she was the incarnation of gaiety, yet in private life she was for the most part strangely grave, and even sad; though, with all the advantages of talent, position and wealth of which she was possessed, it might have been expected she should be otherwise. No one ever discovered the reason. One imagines it to have been that modern disease, "the artistic temperament," and a steady perception of the pitiful fact that all stage triumphs are but transient; and that, popular as she might be, and still was on her retirement in 1751, her fame would not long endure after her death, which actually occurred in 1770. Yet to-day she lives for us in the traditions of the Dance, and in Lancret's exquisite picture, for all to see who visit Hertford House.

## CHAPTER XVI

*JEAN GEORGES NOVERRE, 1727-1810*

**S**UPREME, in charm, above all other early writers on the Dance and Ballet is Jean Georges Noverre, whose genius was praised by Diderot, Voltaire, D'Alembert, Dorat and by our own David Garrick, the last of whom described him as “the Shakespeare” of the Dance.

Born at Paris in April, 1727, he was the son of a distinguished Swiss soldier, who had served as an adjutant in the army of Charles XII, and intended his son for a military career. Jean, however, early developed a passion for the stage, and especially for dancing, so was apprenticed by his father to the famous Parisian dancer and *maitre de ballet*, Dupré.

Young Noverre made his *début* at the Court of Louis XV in a fête at Fontainebleau in August, 1743, but with only moderate success. Not discouraged, however, he went a little later to the Court of Berlin, where he became a favourite with Frederick the Great and his brother, Prince Henry of Prussia.

Noverre returned to France in 1747, and, two years later, obtained the post of *maitre de ballet* at the Opera Comique, where the success of his *Ballet Chinois* aroused considerable jealousy among his colleagues, and brought him some distinction in the art world. But the success was not great enough for his ambitious spirit, and again he travelled, and did not return to Paris for nearly twenty years. Such artists as Noverre are seldom recognised as prophets in their own country until their genius has received recognition abroad. As Castil-Blaze, the historian of opera in France, has neatly said : “Noverre and the two Gardels effected in the Dance the same revolution that Gluck and Sacchini achieved some years later in French music”; but Noverre was unable to do this as a young man in Paris, fighting against the sheer dead weight of convention and hide-bound authority, and he had first to win his laurels abroad.

Sallé, one of the most exquisite and “intellectual” of

*danseuses*, had left Paris for a more appreciative audience in London, because the Paris Opera disliked her attempts to discard the ridiculous conventions of stage costumes then ruling, and to "reform it altogether" in favour of something more congruous.

Noverre visioned himself master of a theatre devoted to a kind of ballet as different from that he saw in Paris as the Russian Ballet we have seen to-day differs from that which London had seen before ; a ballet that should be distinguished by a *technique* so perfect as to be unobtrusive, and combining the arts of dance, pantomime, music and poesy into a new, subtle, resourceful and comprehensive means of artistic expression.

He wanted to see swept away all the old mechanical rules of Ballet composition ; the stereotyped and unimaginative story ; the conventional arrangements of stage groups ; the stilted, "heroic" style of the dancers ; the formal sequence of their *entrées* ; and, above all, the *bizarrie* of their masks, panniers and helmets with waving, funereal plumes. He wanted to infuse a new spirit of art and efficiency into what he found about him, and—he had to go elsewhere !

An invitation from the Duke of Würtemburg to become *maître de ballet* at the luxurious Court of Stuttgart gave him his chance, and here he founded the school which was to influence European Ballet in that and the succeeding generation, as the Russian school has influenced the art of Ballet in modern times.

The publication of his *Lettres sur la Danse, et sur les Ballets*, in 1760, dedicated by permission to this same Duke of Würtemburg and Teck, caused a sensation among dancers in Paris and other capitals ; and, having produced ballets in Berlin, London (1755), Lyons (1758) and Stuttgart, he was re-introduced to Paris by Gaetan Vestris (who had been in the habit of visiting Stuttgart every year, to dance during his vacations) in 1765, when he achieved an immediate success with his tragic ballet of *Medea*.

Later he was to visit Vienna, to superintend the fêtes on the occasion of the marriage of the Archduchess

Caroline (Queen of Naples) ; to produce there a dozen ballets, and become appointed Director of Court fêtes and *Maitre de Danse* to the Empress Maria Theresa and Imperial Family, the Empress heaping favours upon him and granting a lieutenancy to his son.

From Vienna he went to the Court of Milan, where he was created Chevalier of the Order of the Cross ; then to the Courts of Naples and Lisbon ; then to London, and finally again to Paris in 1775, on the invitation of his old pupil, Queen Marie Antoinette, who made him *Maitre des Ballets en Chef* at the Imperial Academy of Music, and Director of the fêtes at Petit Trianon. At the outbreak of the French Revolution he withdrew to London.

A translation of these wonderful *Lettres sur la Danse et sur les Ballets* was published in London in 1780, and was dedicated to the then Prince of Wales, later George IV. In the preface the anonymous translator says : “ The works of Monsieur Noverre, especially the following letters, have been translated into most of the European languages, and thought worthy of a distinguished place in the libraries of the *literati*. ” To which, let me add, they should be so thought to-day, at least in their original French form, for they are of absorbing interest and possess unusual literary charm.

In the somewhat stiff manner of the English of the late Georgian period, his translator remarks of Noverre’s work in the original : “ His manner of writing is chaste, correct and elegant ; perfectly master of his subjects, he treats of them with the utmost perspicuity ; and by the connection which he proves to exist between the other arts and that of dancing, the author lays down rules and precepts for them all ; so that the poet, the painter and the musician may be greatly benefited by the perusal of his works.”

The translator follows with a short history of dancing, and three extremely interesting epistles to Noverre from the great Voltaire, in the first of which, apropos the publication of Noverre’s *Lettres*, he says : “ I have read, sir, your work of genius : my gratitude equals my esteem.

You promise only to treat of dancing, and you shed a light on all the arts. Your style is as eloquent as your ballet is imaginative." In another he remarks : " I have for admiring you, a reason personal to myself ; it is that your works abound with poetical images. Poets and painters shall vie with each other to have you ranked with them." Again he says : " I am surprised that you have not been offered such advantages as might have kept you in France ; but that time is no more when France sets the example to all Europe " ; but elsewhere remarks, curiously enough : " I believe that your merit will be fully recognised in England, for there they love Nature."

It was just this love of Nature and " natural " acting which brought Noverre and Garrick together in mutual admiration and friendship, to the latter of whom, by the way, the French *maitre* pays the highest tribute in his tenth letter.

To turn, however, to the first : " Poetry, painting and dancing are, or ought to be, the faithful copy of Nature . . . a ballet is a piece of painting, the scene is the canvas ; in the mechanical motions of the figures we find the colours . . . the composer himself is the painter.

" Ballets have hitherto been the faint sketch only of what they might one day be. An art entirely subservient, as this is, to taste and genius, may receive daily variations and improvements. History, painting, mythology, poetry, all join to raise it from that obscurity in which it lies buried ; and it is truly surprising that composers have hitherto disdained so many valuable resources. . . . If ballets are for the most part uninteresting and uniformly dull, if they fail in their characteristic *expression* which constitutes their very essence, the defect does not originate from the art itself, but should be ascribed to the artists. Are, then, the latter to be told that dancing is an imitative art ? I am indeed inclined to think that they know it not, since we daily see the generality of composers sacrifice the beauties of the dance and forgo the graceful *naïveté* of sentiment, to become servile copyists of a certain number of figures



MILLE. GUIMARD

A brilliant dancer popular in Paris and London in the later 18th century.  
From a painting by Fragonard



DESPREAUX  
Husband of Gunnard, and Poet of the Dance

“ Ballet masters should consult the productions of the most eminent painters. This would bring them nearer to Nature, and induce them to avoid as often as possible that symmetry of figures which, by repeating the object, presents two separate pictures on one and the same canvas. A ballet, perfect in all its parts, is a picture drawn from life, of the manners, dresses, ceremonies and customs of the various nations. It must be a complete *panto-mime* and through the eyes speak, as it were, to the very soul of the spectator. If it wants expression, if it be deficient in point of situation and scenery, it degenerates into a mere *spectacle*, flat and monotonous.

“ This kind of composition will not admit of mediocrity ; like the art of painting it requires a degree of perfection the more difficult to attain in that it is subordinate to a true imitation of Nature, and that it is next to an impossibility to achieve that all-subduing truth which conceals the illusion from the spectator, carries him, as it were, to the very spot where the scene lies ; and inspires him with the same sentiments as he must experience, were he present at the events which the artist only represents.

“ Ballets, being regular representations, ought to unite the various parts of the drama. Most of the subjects, adapted to the dancer, are devoid of sense and exhibit only a confused jumble of scenes, equally unmeaning and unconnected ; yet it is, in general, absolutely necessary to confine oneself within certain rules. The historical part of a ballet must have its exposition, its incidents, its *dénouement*. The success of this kind of entertainment chiefly depends on choosing good subjects, and dealing with them in a proper manner.”

The foregoing quotations are all of unusual interest as bearing on particular points in dancing and ballet

composition, but I cannot refrain from giving one more, and lengthier, excerpt, the sound common sense of which applies to-day, and will appeal to all modern dancers who realise that the finest opportunities of displaying their skill are, and can only be, found in ballets worthy of their art.

"Every ballet," he says, "complicated and extensive in its subject, which does not point out with clearness and perspicuity the action it is intended to represent, the intrigue of which is unintelligible without a programme or printed explanation : a ballet, in fine, whose plan is not *felt*, and appears deficient in point of exposition, incident and *dénouement* ; such a ballet, I say, will never rise, in my opinion, above a mere *divertissement* of dancing, more or less commendable from the manner in which it is performed. But it cannot affect me much, since it bears no particular character, and is devoid of expression.

"It may be objected that dancing is now in so improved a state that it may please, nay, enchant without the accessory ornaments of expression and sentiment. . . . I readily acknowledge that, as to mechanical execution, the art has attained the highest degree of perfection : I shall even confess that it sometimes is graceful : but gracefulness is but a small portion of the qualities it requires.

"What I call the mechanical parts of dancing are the steps linked to each other with ease and brilliancy, the *aplomb*, steadiness, activity, liveliness and a well-directed opposition between the arms and legs. When all these parts are managed without genius, when the latter does not direct these different motions, and animate them by the fire of sentiment and expression ; I feel neither emotion nor concern. The dexterity of the dancer obtains my applause ; I admire the automaton, but I experience no further sensation. It has upon me the same effect as the most beautiful line, whose words are uncouthly set asunder, producing sound, not sense. As for instance, what would a reader feel at hearing the following detached words : '*Fame-lives-in-dies-he-cause-*

*who-in-virtue's?* Yet these very words aptly joined by the man of genius, by Shakespeare, express the noblest sentiment.

'He lives in Fame who dies in Virtue's cause.'

"From the above comparison we may fairly conclude that the art of dancing has in itself all that is necessary to speak the best language ; but that it is not enough to be acquainted only with its alphabet. Let the man of genius put the letters together, form the words, and from these produce regular sentences ; the art shall no longer be mute, but speak with true energy, and the ballets will share with the best dramatic pieces the peculiar advantage of exciting the tenderest feelings ; nay, of receiving the tribute of a tear ; while, in a less serious style this art will please, entertain and charm the spectators. Dancing thus ennobled by the expression of sentiment and under the direction of a man of true genius, will, in time, obtain the praises which the enlightened world bestows on poetry and painting, and become entitled to the rewards with which the latter are daily honoured."

The closing lines of the above are curiously prophetic of much that we see to-day, though we may question whether we have yet reached the period when an "enlightened world" bestows on Dancing the reward with which other arts have been honoured in the form of State recognition.

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE HOUSE OF VESTRIS

DURING one of the many "revolts" indulged in by the dancers of the Paris Opera against managerial control, which incidentally meant, of course, Royal control, some of the leaders were sent to prison, including Auguste Vestris.

So melodramatically pathetic was the farewell scene with his father, Gaetan, that even his colleagues laughed ! "Go, my son," said *le "Diou" de la Danse* (as he called himself), "this is the most glorious moment of your career. Take my carriage, and ask for the cell which was occupied by my friend the King of Poland. I will meet every expense."

And the great Gaetan is said to have added, with an air of injured dignity, that this was the first time in history that there had been "*any* difference of opinion between the House of Bourbon and the House of Vestris!"

What was the "House of Vestris"? Well, it was a fairly numerous one, of which, so far as our interest is concerned, Gaetan was virtually the founder. He had a father, it is true, who, being employed, it is believed, in a Florentine pawnbroker's, got into some trouble and, with his young family, "cleared" to Naples. There being no trains, wireless or Scotland Yard in those days, they stayed there in safety for a time; the children, who had been taught music and dancing, being made to exercise their talents in that direction for their general support.

The next move was Palermo, where two of the girls, Marie-Thérèse and Violante, with one of the sons, Gaetan, got engagements at the Opera. After that they seem to have scattered and travelled over most of Europe, appearing now in one opera house, now in another, and always deeply engaged in love affairs. It is with their arrival in Paris, and with Gaetan more especially, that we now have to do. He was one of the eight children of Thomas Vestris and his wife, *née*

Violante-Beatrix de Dominique Bruscagli ; but only of three of the family have we much record, namely, Gaetan and the two sisters already mentioned.

Gaetan-Appolino Balthazar Vestris was born at Florence in April, 1729, and in artistic importance—though far from it in physique—was the Anton Dolin of his era. There, however, the resemblance ceases. He was a little man, with the biggest ideas of his own talents ; but his size did not detract from his merits, his sheer style as a dancer ; and from all accounts he is to be ranked as one of the finest male dancers the world has ever known. Indeed, it is hardly an exaggeration to say that he is one of the most important factors in the history of the modern dance, and that his influence as a teacher is seen to-day in the classic operatic school, that is, the school which is based on ages of tradition. For Gaetan, in his time, was the supreme leader of the Dance, and undoubtedly gave a new technical standard and tradition to Paris, the influence of which spread to every opera house on the Continent.

Gaetan Vestris is a link in a chain. One of the first dancing masters to assist Louis XIV in establishing his Royal Academy of Music and Dance (and modern theatrical dancing dates from that event) was Beau-champ, whose pupil was “the great” Dupré, who taught Gaetan Vestris. Gaetan, in turn, taught his son Auguste, of whom in his later years Carlotta Grisi—among others—was a pupil, and there may even be some to-day who have studied under pupils of Carlotta Grisi, who died in 1899.

According to a contemporary biographer Gaetan made his *début* at the Royal Academy of Music and Dance “*sans retribution*” in 1748 ; entered there for study in 1749, became a solo dancer in 1751, a Member of the *Académie Royale de Danse* in 1753 ; a *maître de ballet* in 1761 until 1770, and composer and master of ballet from that year until 1776. From time to time he visited Stuttgart—as the Russian dancers to-day have visited London—“in vacation” ; and, in the theatre there, under the direction of that master of ballet-composition

and stage reformer, Jean Georges Noverre, Vestris found greater scope for his abilities than in the more conventional work of the Paris Opera.

We have seen that by her invention of new and rapid steps, Camargo had infused new life into the technique of theatrical dancing some years before Gaetan Vestris attained supremacy. He, in turn, came to exert a new influence, mainly in the direction of a certain *largeur* of movement and gesture, perhaps a certain grandiosity ; as well as setting a new standard in perfection of execution.

A contemporary critic declared : "When Vestris appeared at the Opera one really believed it was Apollo who had come to earth to give lessons in grace. He perfected the art of the Dance : gave more freedom to the 'positions' already known ; and created new ones."

Undoubtedly he learnt much from Noverre, even as the latter had learnt much, in the matter of production and acting, from our own David Garrick. Noverre conceived the idea of creating, or re-creating, the Dance with action, in short, the *ballet-pantomime* ; at least its creation was claimed, and, by some of his contemporaries, attributed to him ; though we have seen that he had forerunners in the Duchesse de Maine, and, too, in Sallé, who was an ardent stage reformer, and seems to have influenced Noverre. But it was the latter who took practical steps towards instituting the real *ballet d'action*, the true *mimed* Ballet as we have seen it in modern times.

Up to his period Opera-ballet had been always somewhat rigid in form : there were music, singing and dancing ; but the dances were detached items in the general effect. The regulation form was : *passepieds* in the prologue ; *musettes* in the first act ; *tambourins* in the second ; *chaconnes* and *passacailles* in the third and fourth.

It was never the plot of the opera which decided the introduction of the dances, but quite other considerations, such as the particular excellence of particular

dancers in their special dances—the best performers usually appearing last. It was routine, not the action of the story, by which these things were ordered ; and the poet who had provided the plot, the musician who had composed the music, the *costumier* and scenic artist, and even the ballet-master, each worked detachedly, without regard to consultation and co-operation towards an artistic unity of effect.

The lines had been set, the routine laid down for all time ; any deviation therefrom seemed impossible, a thing vainly imagined only by a heretic, who could not hope to win in a fight against the established form and authority of the Opera. Yet the reformation came ! Noverre, the reformer, found in Gaetan Vestris a technical exponent who responded to his influence, and in Dauberval another ; and at Stuttgart, the time and place for artistic experiment.

It is to this triumvirate that credit was given in their own time for the reform of the *scène chorégraphique*, a reform which had to struggle against and overcome tradition, prejudice, ignorance and all the obstinacy of authority. Slow progress was made at first. Stuttgart had its effect, but the Paris Opera still clung to the bizarre accessories which were then regarded as inherent to the dignity of the theatre—the masks, under which faces were hidden, the towering wigs by which heads were bowed ; the absurd panniers, the puffed skirts, the great breast-plates, all forming the heroic panoply by which the leading players were known for hero and heroine, and traces of which may be found in those amusingly pompous spangled figures beloved of our great-grandfathers and great-grandmothers in their childhood, during the first half of last century.

Gaetan Vestris was the first dancer who dared to discard that absurd convention—the mask, and so reveal that expressive play of feature which made *acted* ballet possible. This was in 1770, when he appeared in a ballet-pantomime on the story of *Medea and Jason*. He astonished the audience by the dramatic force of his miming, and by the nobility of his physiognomical

expression. One critic wrote : “ Le mérite particulier de Vestris c’était la grâce, l’élégance et la délicatesse. Tous ses pas avaient une pureté, un fini dont on ne peut se faire une idée aujourd’hui, et ce n’est pas sans quelque raison qu’on compare son talent à celui de Racine.”

For all his artistic talent as dancer and mime, however, Gaetan was practically illiterate ; ignorant of all save the art in which he excelled ; and his conceit was colossal.

One day, when he was coming from a rehearsal at the Opera, a somewhat ample lady happened in passing to tread rather heavily on one of his feet. In deep concern she apologised profusely, and expressed an earnest hope that she had not seriously hurt him.

“ Hurt me, Madam ! ” he answered. “ *Me !* You have only put all Paris into mourning for a fortnight ! ”

His pride in his son was stupendous, and he once declared that “ If Auguste does not always float in the air it is solely out of consideration for the feelings of jealous, and less talented, mortals.” As to himself, on one occasion he volunteered the assertion that his century had produced but three really great men, Frederick the Great, Voltaire and—himself !

Of the various susceptible ladies who succumbed to the fascination of this “ *Diou de la Danse* ”—as in Italianate-French he called himself—the most notable (apart from his legitimate wife, the beautiful *danseuse*, Heinel, who invented the piroquette and whom he married in 1752) was Mlle Allard.

Of humble origin, Marie-Allard was born on August 14th, 1742, at Marseilles, where, at an early age, she entered the local theatre. On the death of her mother she decided to leave an uninterested father, and made her way to Lyons, where she found another, not very brilliant, theatrical engagement. At the age of fourteen, tiring of Lyons, she set out to win fame in Paris, where she entered the Comédie Française. In the course of time she came to know Gaetan Vestris, and with him studied dancing.

She made her *début* at the Opera in June, 1760, and

delighted the audience with the *verve*, grace and gaiety of her dance. Though she shone especially in comedy, she was noted as a clever actress in tragedy ; and while “Sylvie,” in the comedy-ballet of that name, was one of her most successful parts, she is said to have moved beholders to tears by her performance in Noverre’s production of *Medea*.

In the lighter *rôles*, however, she was especially popular, and from the moment of her *entrée* (she was the only dancer at the Opera who was allowed to compose her own *entrées*, not edible !) her gaiety of manner was such as almost to eclipse the real talent displayed in her dancing. Unfortunately, her public career came to a close all too soon for her admirers, from a cause which even she with all her agility and incessant exercise was unable to control—a tendency to *embonpoint* ! She retired in 1781 and died in 1802 ; but not before she had seen the success of her and Gaetan Vestris’ son, Auguste, who, known as “Vestr'-Allard,” seemed to combine within him the respective choreographic perfections of his mother and father.

Gaetan Vestris, having retired in 1782, lived until 1808, and rejoiced to see his son acknowledged as supreme. On him he graciously conferred the title of “*Le Diou de la Danse*” ; and he declared that it was, after all, only natural that Auguste should excel, since the young man possessed but *one* advantage over himself—he had “had Gaetan for his father !”

Auguste, or Marie Auguste, to give his full name, was born at Paris in 1760. He made his *début* at the age of twelve in a *divertissement* entitled *Cinquantaine*, with a *chaconne*, which he danced with a grace and distinction such as had never before been seen. In 1773 he made a strikingly successful appearance as Eros in the ballet of *Endymion* ; and, though already recognised as a master, he entered the Academy school in 1775, and the Opera in the following year. For some time he accepted subordinate *rôles*, but generally his consummate ability in all he undertook brought him forward ; and, as he became more and more the pet of the ladies of the

Opera and the admiration of its patrons, he began to develop his father's traits, especially conceit.

On one occasion the Director, de Vismes, annoyed at some impertinence of the young man, said, "Monsieur Vestris, do you know to whom you speak?"

"Yes," Auguste replied, "to the farmer of my talent."

It says much for that talent that his appearance at the Opera during some thirty-five years, under Louis XVI, the Republic and the Empire, largely accounted for its prosperity in those amazing times. He had his father's grace, precision, suppleness and style, but more of spirit and vivacity; a greater gift of *mime*; and was as good in *genre*, as in the nobler *rôles*. He paid several visits to London, and always with success.

He married in 1795 a young dancer, Anne Catherine Augier, who made her *début* at the Opera two years before under the *nom de théâtre* of Aimée; but his infatuation for her modesty, charm and many good qualities did not last any longer than had his other infatuations for worse qualities in less desirable ladies; and his infidelities led her to attempt suicide, with results that left her more or less an invalid, until death put an end to her unhappy existence in 1809. Auguste Vestris himself died in 1842, and left one son, Auguste Armand, who made his *début* at the Opera, as did a cousin, Charles Vestris, both being pupils of Auguste; and both toured abroad; but neither seems to have added greater brilliance to the family name than had been achieved for it first by Gaetan and then by Auguste, the first and most distinguished upholders of the "House of Vestris."

## CHAPTER XVIII

*GUIMARD THE GRAND, 1743-1816*

**F**OR some thirty of Madeleine Guimard's seventy-three years of life she was the idol of Paris, rising from obscurity to power and returning again from a joyous life set in high places to a lonely death in obscurity.

Authorities differ, as authorities so often do over the advent of new stars in the firmament of life, as to the date of Guimard's birth. One says the 2nd, and another the 10th and yet a third the 20th of October. Edmond de Goncourt—not infallible on other points—gives the date of her baptism correctly as December 27th, 1743. She made her *début* before the Parisian public when she was about sixteen, at the Comédie Française. She was received into the Academy in 1762 at the age of nineteen, and at a salary of six hundred livres.

Her face was not exactly beautiful ; she had not Sophie Arnould's shrewish wit, though she had humour ; but her gestures, her expressive face, above all her eyes, all spoke eloquently ; her dancing seemed always the true and spirited expression of sentiments really felt ; and, in whatsoever rôle, she was always brilliant. She had that glamour which makes up for beauty of feature, and had, too, caprice of mood and a commanding manner, both qualities which susceptible men find enchanting.

Her chroniclers have not always been kind. A contemporary wrote : “La Guimard a des caprices, entre nous. On ne peut compter sur elle. . . . Son arrogance n'a pas de nom. . . . Ce que la Guimard veut, bon gré, mal gré, il faut qu'on le veuille.” And there you have it ! “What Guimard wishes, willy-nilly one must wish.” That is a touch that tells : the words ring true. Intriguing, capricious—masterful. What wonder, then, that she came to rise by her own buoyancy of manner and morals and sought the rarified but, in the days of Louis XV, far from inaccessible atmosphere of Court circles.

Guimard made her *début* at the Opera in May, 1762, as "Terpsichore" in a ballet called *Les Caractères de la Danse*, and achieved a triumph. From that time until she retired from the stage she was practically without a rival in the affections of the Parisian audiences. One testimony to her popularity is found in the promptitude with which she was nicknamed. Guimard, if not beautiful in face, had, nevertheless, a beautiful figure, was quite unusually graceful, carried herself nobly, and was altogether a commanding and magnetic personage ; but, for all her beauty of figure, Guimard was amazingly slim.

Seeing her in a classical ballet, dancing as a nymph between two fauns—impersonated by the celebrated male dancers, Vestris *père* and Dauberval—Sophie Arnould remarked that it reminded her of "two dogs fighting for a bone." Another of her footnotes on Guimard was the description of her as "Le Squelette des Grâces," which also had the saving grace of being partly a compliment ; and it was by this nickname that Madeleine was generally known throughout Paris.

To judge from this insistence on Madeleine's thinness, one might imagine that she could not be as attractive, certainly hardly as graceful, as has been said. But such nicknames are, though emphasising some special characteristic, usually only marks of popularity, and that Guimard really was graceful can be gathered from the summing up of Noverre who had seen her dance for years and knew, as only a great ballet-master could, what he was talking about, when he said that : "from her *début* to her retirement she was always graceful, naturally so. She never sought after difficulties. A lovable and noble simplicity reigned in her dance ; she designed it with perfect taste, and put expression and sentiment into all her movements."

Of her performance in Gardel's ballet, *La Chercheuse d'Esprit*, in which she played the title-rôle, a contemporary wrote that "her eloquent silences surpassed the vivid, easy and seductive diction of Mme Favart" ; and he

mentions one point that is of special interest when we remember the battle Noverre had fought to achieve some reform of costume on the Opera stage, namely, that Guimard, "following the example of Mme Favart, discarded the *panniers* and the *cuirasse* of conventional costume."

It was not long after success came to her that Guimard accepted the protection of the Prince de Soubise. One of her first acquisitions in 1768 was a superb residence at Pantin, just outside Paris, which was decorated by Fragonard. It was visited by everybody who *was* anybody, for, apart from the charms of its mistress, there was a theatre in the mansion where entertainments of a very special kind were staged, little poetic trifles or risky comedies, which, while delighting a circle of appreciative *connoisseurs*, would not have been staged in the ordinary way, as being *caviare* to the general.

The place at Pantin, however, did not suffice the exigent Madeleine, and a town-house was taken also in the Chaussée d'Antin—next to that of Sophie Arnould, by the way—where another theatre was built, and where even more festive entertainments were provided, a theatre which could seat five hundred persons (only present by invitation), which received the name of The Temple of Terpsichore. It was designed by the architect Ledoux, decorated by Fragonard, who did numerous lovely panels in which Guimard appeared; and by David, then a youthful assistant, whom Madeleine's generous aid is said to have sent to Rome for the furtherance of his art education.

Here in the course of time all Paris came. Here Guimard held her famous receptions—three a week. To the first of these were invited members of the Court circle, the aristocracy of the aristocracy; to the second—artists, actors, actresses, musicians, poets, the aristocracy of the world of art and intellect; to the third—certain polished rakes and roués, with their attendant Phrynes, the aristocracy of vice. Well might discreet and reputedly virtuous ladies of the Court hide behind the curtains of the darkened and mysterious boxes with

If men were weak where Guimard was concerned, there is no need to consider her as worse than she was, or to ignore her undeniable and many fine qualities. There may have been reasons why Madeleine did not marry sooner than she did, but in an age notorious for its callousness and cruelty, as well as for its moral laxity, she was distinguished as a woman not merely of fascination but of good heart and generous impulses.

Did not a preacher say of her in the pulpit : "The hand which gives so well will not be refused when knocking at the gates of Paradise"? And why? Because all who were in trouble had but to turn to Guimard for help—poor players, artists, poets, all. Because, though every year she received a handsome present from Soubise, one year, in 1768, when the winter had dealt cruelly with the Paris poor, she begged that, instead of sending her jewellery, the Prince would send her the equivalent in money, and when she received it



CARLO BLASIS

Born 1803, died 1878. Director of the Imperial Academy of Dance and Pantomime at the Scala, Milan, from 1837; and author of *The Code of Tapischore*, etc. From a lithograph of 1831.

A LESSON IN THE MINT.



she added more, and went herself to all the poor folk in her neighbourhood and fed the starving ; went unostentatiously, from simple good-heartedness and sympathy ; and it was the populace who spoke of it, not she.

She had her foibles, her little vanities perhaps, as when at Longchamps one summer she appeared in an equipage gorgeously embellished with somewhat startling arms—mistletoe growing out of a gold mark, which glowed in the middle of a shield, the Graces serving as supports, with a group of Cupids as a crown !

Guimard could be jealous on occasion. A Mlle Dervieux, appearing as a singer at the Academy without success, had the audacity to reappear as a dancer, and to triumph. This Madeleine would possibly not have minded, but her own pet poet, Dorat, celebrated Mlle Dervieux's success in verse ; and this poetic infidelity was more than Madeleine could stand, with the consequence that all the pamphleteers of Paris were forthwith ranged on sides, and a paper war took place between the rival supporters of the two fair dancers ; characters were torn to rags and, in the course of time, the battle burnt itself out, as such usually do, without anyone being seriously the worse.

Strangely enough it was just at this time that Guimard herself elected to make an appearance as a singer. When there was a revival of some of the old pieces in the repertoire of the Royal Academy, including *Les Fêtes d'Hébé ou les Talents Lyriques*, for which Rameau had written the music, Guimard appeared in this as Aglaia, one of the three Graces—"with song and dance," as one might say to-day. But it was, as so often the case in modern days, only the charm of the dance that made it possible to forgive the disillusion of the song, for Madeleine's voice was thin and hard.

It was as a dancer, and always as a dancer, that Guimard excelled. It was as a dancer she won her chief successes in the ballets *La Chercheuse d'Esprit* (1778), *Ninette à la Cour* (1778), *Mirza* (1779), *La Rosière* (1784) and *Le*

It was as a dancer she had the good fortune to please the King, Louis XVI, who, always a generous patron of the arts—with the nation's money!—gave her, for one dance that she performed before him and the Queen, a pension of six thousand livres a year, giving at the same time a pension of one thousand a year to the man who danced with her, Despréaux, who later became her husband. This pension came to her the year following her appearance in *Le Premier Navigateur*, in 1786, apparently just at a time she was much in need of money. One may believe that Madeleine's impulsive generosity had helped to bring about that need, as well as her known extravagance. For one thing, apart from her being ready to assist less fortunate artists, she had been the prime mover in an act of wholesale renunciation.

The Prince of Soubise, also a generous patron of the arts, had been allowing a handsome annual pension to a number of dancers at the Opera, as well as treating them all to periodical supper parties of most sumptuous kind. Suddenly the supper parties ceased; the Prince was no longer seen among the audiences at the Opera; and it came to be known that his son-in-law had become bankrupt, and that the entire family were doing their best to meet the creditors honourably.

When this was known, all the dancers foregathered in Madeleine's *loge* at the Opera; and a stately, kindly, tactful letter was drawn up and signed by the *pensionnaires*, some thirty or more, headed by Guimard. The length of it precludes entire quotation in a chapter all too short to cover Madeleine's crowded seventy-three

years, but, after referring to their regret at the Prince's absence, to delay in approaching him, due to fear lest they be thought wanting in consideration, and to the urgent motive which had overcome such scruples on hearing the news of the bankruptcy confirmed, the writers of the letter then go on to say that they feel they would be guilty of ingratitude were they not to imitate the Prince's renunciations on behalf of his relative, and restore to him the pensions with which his generosity had provided them. "Apply," the letter continues, "these revenues, Monseigneur, to the relief of so many old soldiers, poor men of letters, and such unhappy retainers as the Prince de Guéméné draws with him in his downfall. As for us, other resources remain. We shall have lost nothing, Monseigneur, if we retain your esteem. We shall even have gained if, in refusing to-day your kindly gifts, we force our detractors to acknowledge that we were not unworthy of them. We are, with deep respect, Monseigneur, your Serene Highness's very humble servants, Guimard, Heinel, Peslin, Dorival, etc. etc." The letter is dated December 6th, 1782.

It was now that Guimard was paying periodical summer visits to London for the Opera seasons. Edmond de Goncourt, in his monograph on the dancer, gives two very interesting letters written by Guimard apropos to these London sojourns, one to Perregaux the Banker, dated June 20th, 1784, the other to M. de la Ferté, Director of the *Académie*, dated May 26th, 1786, and both addressed from No. 10, Pall Mall. In the former, she gives amusing account of the way in which Gallini and Ravelli, then directing the Opera in London, had sought to take advantage of a fire at the old Opera House, in order to break the contract with Guimard by which she was to receive six hundred and fifty guineas for the season.

The fire seemed at first likely to put a closure on the season, but Covent Garden was placed at the disposal of the Opera. Gallini, making alleged losses the excuse, tried to induce Madeleine to reduce her terms for the

rest of the season. Finding she would only agree to providing her own costumes—no light consideration—he pretended satisfaction and departed. Ravelli, however, followed and, evidently by arrangement, informed her that Gallini was several kinds of idiot, and that he had been deposed in favour of Ravelli who, as the new stage manager, came to offer her fresh terms, twenty-five louis a performance on behalf of Gallini !

Guimard smiled and expressed astonishment that Ravelli should make such propositions from Gallini since the latter was no longer in power, and added that she held them to her contract. When she turned up at rehearsal with a couple of witnesses, and having consulted solicitors, Ravelli "looked green" and Gallini "stupefied." They offered fresh proposals and tried to wriggle out of their contract, but Guimard won, of course, and the more so in that, though her chief friends among the English aristocracy, notably the Duchess of Devonshire, were out of town, enough were left to make things uncomfortable for Gallini, who found his conduct the talk of the town.

The second letter, to M. la Ferté, is mainly good advice on the direction of the Opera and encouragement of rising talent, and for this giving of counsel she begs that he will excuse her, since it is out of friendship for him and also on account of her desire, in her own words, "ne pas voir détruire entièrement la belle danse, que j'ai vu exister à l'Opéra." In both letters she sends—in the inevitable postscript!—charming messages to the wives of her correspondents, and mentions some little commissions with which they had entrusted her.

That she did not have a bad time in London may be gathered from the fact that she excuses herself for not having written sooner because, since she arrived in town, she had not been left a minute to herself by "*les plus grandes dames*," principally by the Duchess of Devonshire, with whom she spent most of the time that she had away from the theatre. Of the London audiences generally she remarks : "*Ils m'aiment à la folie, ces bons Anglais !*" Not the first—or last—time a charming

foreign dancer has been beloved of “*ces bons Anglais*” !

But with all the friendship of the great and the love of the populace, and her six hundred and fifty guineas for the London season, Guimard’s financial position was not what it had been. The Soubise pension had been relinquished ; that she received from the King in view of twenty years’ service at the Opera hardly sufficed her requirements ; and the time came, in 1786, when she found it convenient to dispose of her mansion in the Chaussée d’Antin. This she did by arranging, without police sanction, a lottery, tickets for which numbered two thousand five hundred, at a hundred and twenty livres each, a total sum of three hundred thousand livres. There was a fierce demand for the tickets, and twice the number could have been sold. The drawing took place in a *salon* of the Hôtel des Menus-Plaisirs, Rue Bergère, on the 1st of May, 1786, and Madeleine’s mansion with all its furniture went to a Comtesse, who, by the way, had only taken one ticket !

It is worth noting that Madeleine had now reached the age of forty-three, that she had never been pretty, and that she was marked with smallpox, with which—a current danger at those times—she had been attacked in 1783. To a clever and magnetic personality age matters not, nor do looks mean everything, since in any case they are bound to alter in the course of a few decades ; and even smallpox is not fatal to fascination. But these things, nevertheless, have to be admitted when one comes to years of discretion. One wonders whether Madeleine, who was eminently a woman of sense, now began to face facts and the future, and whether the doing so, or else mere circumstances, political and social, impelled her to the next step in her career—marriage.

People had wondered how Guimard had managed to keep exactly the same appearance for so many years. This was the secret ! When she was twenty she had a portrait painted that was exactly like her, and afterwards, for some twenty years or so, every morning she

would study this and make herself up to resemble it exactly, and neither lover nor friend was ever admitted to this toilette. It was an ingenious idea, but could not last for ever. It is all the more interesting then to note the next important incident in Guimard's career, her marriage with a man whom she had known for years. In 1789, Guimard retired from the Opera ; in 1789 she married Despréaux, dancer, musician and poet ; and in 1789 the gathering storms of revolution broke, and Paris, smitten first by famine, became for the next few years a hell, in which, strangely enough, there was still a demand for entertainment lighter and less fervid than massacre.

When Guimard and Despréaux—comrades for at least twenty-five years—married, they settled down on a fairly comfortable income, derived from their pensions and acquired property, at Montmartre ; and one of Jean Despréaux's poems gives a charming picture of their retreat in those troubled times. But, during the Revolution, State finances were in disorder, and pensions were curtailed or discontinued, and all the old favourites of the Opera were more or less involved in difficulties. In 1792 the city of Paris having confided the care of the Opera to Francœur and Celerier, they nominated Despréaux director of the theatre and a member of the administrative committee, but this did not last. The following year Francœur and Celerier were imprisoned ; the actors were authorised to manage the theatre themselves, and Despréaux—whose father, by the way, had been leader of the orchestra at the Opera, and killed himself the same year from despair at the general ruin around him—was allotted some part in the management of the public fêtes.

In 1796—the year of the establishment of the Directory—Madeleine reappeared for a benefit given on January 23rd for the veteran performers at the Opera who had all suffered grievous losses in the Revolution. In 1807, three years after the crowning of Napoleon—by which time the national ferment had begun to settle down and the languished arts to take hope again—an

Imperial decree, dated July 29th, reduced the number of theatres in Paris to eight ; and the *Académie Imperiale de Musique*, as it was now called, had for Director, Picard, the comic poet ; and for "inspecteur," Despréaux.

But these casual and precarious employments were not enough to remedy the losses that husband and wife sustained in the lean and fevered years from 1789, when they settled down in their high-perched nest overlooking all Paris in Montmartre, until 1807, when Despréaux became again attached to the Opera ; and that this employment, too, did not last we know from a letter which Madeleine wrote to a friend in 1814, imploring him to use his influence with people at Court to obtain from Louis XVIII some position for her husband, a letter in which she mentions the loss of their entire fortune owing to the Revolution, and she pleads "*nos besoins sont bien urgent.*"

There is every probability that their needs really were urgent. Guimard had never been charged with thrift ; and Despréaux was a poet. Both started married life with a fair capital—all things henceforth held in common, of course, according to the law—but fortune was against them ; and though they might perhaps have weathered the storm had they been twenty years younger, it was almost inevitable that, their pensions gone, their capital diminishing, they should find the struggle grow yearly harder, and their chance of replenishing their coffers less. De Goncourt gives a somewhat idyllic picture of the last years of the old couple, mainly on the basis of Jean's poems (and he was ever an optimist !) ; but he also gives us one true, interesting and poignant glimpse of Madeleine as an old lady who, with a model theatre, would, for the amusement of friends who chanced to drop in, go through the scenes of former splendour, and, with her frail fingers, perform the steps that had made her famous in many a ballet of the past.

Apparently Madeleine's appeal to friends at Court must have had some success, for, in the following year,

1815, her husband was appointed Inspector-General of the Court Entertainments and Professor "*de danse et de grâces*" at the Conservatoire ; but it is probable that only the last three or four years of their married life brought them any return of fortune.

## CHAPTER XIX

### *DESPREAUX, POET OF THE DANCE*

**G**UIMARD'S genial and accomplished husband, M. Despréaux, was born in 1748, five years after Mlle Guimard, and was the son of a musician at the Paris Opera, where he himself was entered as a supernumerary dancer in 1764. He made rapid progress in the art of his choice and won increasing reputation until, unhappily, a wound in the foot completely closed his career as a "star"; and, being a man of much theatrical experience and general culture, he then became a violinist and later a *maître de ballet*. In 1789 he married Madeleine Guimard, whom he had long worshipped, and the two retired, as we know, at the opening of the Revolution to a cosy nest on the heights of Montmartre. So high were they and so steep was the roadway approaching their dwelling, that the Revolutionary patrols refrained from troubling them; and, save for financial losses and rumours of distant guns, the couple remained untroubled by the red and raging anarchy in the city stretched at their feet.

Edmond de Goncourt makes out—on what authority, I cannot fathom—that Despréaux was born in 1758, and *not* 1748, thus making him out to be fifteen years the junior of Guimard when they married in 1789. But seeing that Despréaux was undoubtedly entered a supernumerary dancer at the Opera in 1764 and could hardly have been so at the age of six, one can only infer a slip of the pen, and that Goncourt really meant 1748, which would make the young dancer's age the likelier one of sixteen when he appeared at Opera as a super.

What matters more for us, however, is that Despréaux, following modestly in the footsteps of his far greater predecessor, Boileau-Despréaux (not an ancestor, by the way), had cultivated a taste for poetry, and, during his retirement at Montmartre, he divided his time between amusing his wife and friends with cutting silhouettes,

at which he was an expert, and singing songs and parodies which he had written himself.

It seems perhaps a little strange that a man should be thus amusing himself and his friends—should be sufficiently undistracted to do so—while the greatest Revolution known to history should be in progress. But what could he do ? He was a dancer, a musician, a poet, an artist ; and could have had little weight had he meddled in the risky game of politics. As it was, perhaps, he chose the saner course and, when most were losing their heads, he kept his own ; and, as Richard Cœur de Lion had done when in prison, wiled away the hours in song.

His poems were collected and published in two volumes under the title : *Mes Passe-Temps : Chanson, suivies de l'Art de la Danse, poème en quatre chants, calqué sur l'Art Poétique de Boileau Despréaux*. The work was published after the Revolutionary fever had subsided in 1806 ; and perhaps the very strangest comment on the Revolution is implied in Despréaux's preface, which calmly opens with the following : “ In 1794 I suggested to a number of friends that we should meet once or twice a month to dine together, under the condition that politics should never be mentioned and that each should bring a song composed upon a given word. My proposition was taken up ; we decided that the words should be drawn by lot, after being submitted to the judgment of the gathering, in order to eliminate subjects which might only present needless difficulties.”

And so the year 1794 being one of the worst of all those red years of Revolution, this little circle went placidly through it, dining and wining and rhyming, as if there were nothing worse than a sham fight raging round the distant horizon. It positively makes one wonder if there *was* a French Revolution after all. But no, there evidently was, for our author had a nice little library, and in the following year, owing to monetary losses occasioned by the general *débâcle*, he had to sell many of his beloved volumes. Of course he made song about it—“ Ma Bibliothèque, ou Le Cauchemar ”—in

which he pictures the spectre of Want asking him what he will do, and urging him to sell his books for food. “*Que feras-tu, Despréaux?*” the nightmare questions :

“ Ni bois ni vin dans ta cave,  
De chandelle pas un bout :  
Faussement on fait le brave  
Lorsque l'on manque de tout ?

Une tartine de beurre  
Vaut plus que jardis un bœuf,  
Dans un mois, à pareille heure  
Quel sera le prix d'un œuf ?  
Par décade mille livres  
Ne peuvent payer ton pain,  
Mon ami, *mange tes livres*  
*Pour ne pas mourir de faim.*”

The spectre points out that the prospect of having to do so is no mere dream, and urges him to sell “*tous tes tuteurs fameux*,” pointing out that he could live on the “divine” Homér for at least a day or two, while on the “*pensif*” Rousseau he could exist a long time. He could count on his precious Virgil for the rent ; while the translation by Delille should yield his old gardener’s wages. Among the many works mentioned in indiscriminate order are—Plutarch, La Fontaine, Don Quichotte, Anacréon, Newton, Milton, Cicero, Horace, Juvenal, Boccaccio, Erasmus, Montesquieu, Boileau, Corneille, Voltaire, Racine, Favart, Molière, Plato, Dorat, Seneca and a set of the British Drama ! A remarkable library for a dancer.

It should be noted, by the way, that Despréaux had some knowledge of English, and had paid occasional visits to London with his wife, and in one of his poems he gives an amusingly bitter “Tableau de Londres,” in which he complains of :

“ Cette atmosphère de cendre  
Qui ne cesse de descendre,”

speaks of the lower classes as “insolent” and chaffs the English taste for beer and eternal “roast-biff” (*sic*) ;

while as to the English Sunday, the stanza must really be given in full :

“ Deux cents dimanches anglais,  
N’en valent pas un français,  
Ce jour, si joyeux en France,  
Est le jour de pénitence ;  
Et lorsqu’un Anglais se pend,  
Se pend, se pend,  
C’est un dimanche qu’il prend ;  
A Paris, le dimanche on danse.  
Vive la France ! ”

Our poet’s range of subject was remarkable—high philosophy, discussed with smiling raillery ; curious life-contrasts, such as that of his wife being a popular dancer, and his sister a nun ; charades and dialogues ; charming and pathetic little word-pictures like “ *La Neige* ”; a “ *Bacchic* ” song on “ *The End of the World*, ” and so forth, nothing seemed to come amiss that could be turned into song. Throughout his varied work there runs a consistent strain of Gallic gaiety—itself a form of bravery ; and if his Muse has not the hard, biting intensity of a Villon, nor the lofty rhetoric of a Victor Hugo, it manages to keep a middle course of sanity and pleasantry with invariable success and an infallible, though limited, appeal.

Among his many ingenious poems are two of special interest to stage-folk of all time, one “ *La Langage des Mains*, ” *Chanson Pantomime*, the other “ *La Langage des Yeux* ” ; both of which require to be illustrated by the actor who sings them, and emphasise the need of facial and manual expression. As he truly says :

“ Le comédien ou l’orateur,  
Sans mains, serait un corps sans âme.

Both poems are too long for reproduction here, but one cannot refrain from quoting the opening stanza of each, that from “ *Le Langage des Mains* ” running :

“ A mes leçons, jeunes humains  
Prenez une oreille attentive ;



MARIE TAGLIONI

Born 1803; died 1884. Who with her performance of "Sylphide" in 1832 introduced new light and idealism into the technique of the Dance and Ballet.



FANNY ELSSLER  
Born 1811; died 1884. From an engraving of 1848

Je vais de langage des mains,  
 Vous montrer la règle expressive :  
 Avec la main, nous affirmons ;  
 Avec le poing, l'homme menace ;  
 Avec le doigt nous indiquons ;  
 Les mains jointes demandent grâce.”

The first stanza of “Le Langage des Yeux” runs as follows :

“ J'ai l'art de lire dans les yeux,  
 Et de savoir ce que l'on pense ;  
 J'y vois si le cœur est heureux,  
 S'il est capable de constance :  
 Que de chose disent les yeux !  
 Que notre bouche n'ose dire !  
 Les miens, dans cet art merveilleux,  
 Joints à mes vers vont vous instruire.”

Each of the poems is rightly described as a “Chanson Pantomime,” and both are well worthy of close study by any actor or dancer of to-day.

In another of his poems appears the phrase, “La Walse (*sic*) aux mille tours,” while among the notes at the end of the volume is a definition which may be translated as follows : “Walse—a Swiss dance the music of which is in 3-4 time ; but it has only the value of two steps. It is done by a couple pirouetting while circling round the *salon*. It has nothing in it of complexity ; it is the art in its infancy. When its rhythm is in 2 time it is called *sauteuse*.”

Despréaux’ note on what, at that period, was a new ballroom dance is particularly interesting. The word *sauteuse* suggests the ordinary polka in 2-4 time, in the customary manner, for any dance described as *sauteuse* means one in which the feet are raised from the ground, or in which leaping is indulged in, *not* when the feet glide on the ground, as in the modern waltz. The old *volta*, from which the modern waltz is derived, was, it will be remembered, a *leaping* dance.

The greater part of Despréaux’ second volume is mainly devoted to his lengthy paraphrase of the great Boileau’s *L’Art Poétique*, under the title of *L’Art de la*

*Danse*, which is full of sound instruction to dancers and interesting criticism of his contemporaries, but over which we must not linger now. To return to more personal matters concerning the poet and his dancer-wife : Madeleine Guimard died on May 4th, 1816. For years out of sight of a public which had long had other, less gracious, subjects for thought, her death passed almost unnoticed by the populace for whose amusement she had worked so loyally in her prime. Four years later, on March 26th, 1820, Despréaux followed her who had been his adored comrade for the greater portion of their lives. He had seen her, as little more than a child, win her earliest triumphs at the Opera ; had seen her growing splendour as a woman of fashion ; had watched her through many years, danced with her, written for her and about her, seen her worst and best, and loved her well enough all through to wait till she would consent to marry him, and, with him, retire from the stage they had so long adorned ; and through the years—troublous for no fault of theirs—which followed their marriage, he cheered and consoled her for all she had relinquished, for the public worship all forgone, and for the neglect of the rising generation.

He it was who, though their means can hardly have permitted it, instituted the little *déjeuners* and supper-parties of kindred spirits, where songs were written and ballads sung in praise of love and wine and “la Gloire”—the cry of the French Romanticists ; all, one may well think, to cheer his beloved, whose charm and goodness, poet himself, he never ceased to sing.

Guimard had been grand ; Guimard may have been gay ; but through it all Guimard must have been good in heart, full of sympathy and courage and generous charities of mind and soul ; and Despréaux, gentle, wise, humorous, idealistic, honest, must have found her so, to speak and write of her as he always did, with ardour and a kind of boyish awe, even after she had passed away. No note of discord marred their married

years, and when Guimard came to make her exit from the stage of life, silently, with nothing but ghostly memories of applause, her comrade, well we may be sure, waited only with impatience for his cue to follow her.

## CHAPTER XX

### *A CENTURY'S CLOSE*

**W**E have lingered somewhat over these sketches of the eighteenth century; let us hasten over that century's close, for it was drowned in blood.

"Revolution," they called the madness which seized on France. Heralded by fair promises of universal brotherhood, what did all the fine talk of her socialistic "intellectuals" and "philosophs" end in? A state of anarchy, national madness, in which no man's life was safe, and no woman's honour. War is horrible enough between nations; what, then, of civil war between individuals, "men, *brother* men?" Strange, is it not, that while the dying century was performing its dance of death, theatres should be open, operas, comedies and ballets be performed.

Before Guimard and her literary husband had begun to find their fortunes affected by the Revolution there were few theatres in Paris. Indeed, there were only five of any importance giving daily performances in 1775, and of these the Opera was the leading house, as of old, the work of Gluck, Grétry, Piccinni and Sacchini holding the bill in Opera for a period of some thirty years onward, the work of ballet-composition being mainly in the hands of Noverre and the brothers Maximilian and Pierre Gardel.

It was from the end of that year, too, when Noverre's *Médée* was produced, that the novelty of ballet-pantomime, having come to replace the earlier opera-ballet, now became generally known simply as *Ballet*.

In 1781 the Paris Opera was the scene of a tremendous fire, in which, owing to the presence of mind of Dauberaval, one of the leading dancers, in quickly lowering the curtain during a performance of the ballet, the audience were able to escape; but several of the dancers were burnt, and Guimard herself, discovered cowering in one of the boxes clad only in her underwear, was rescued by one of the stage-hands. The famous house was

ruined, and the company removed to a provisional house, erected by the architect Lenoir, by the Porte St. Martin.

Ten years later, in 1791, a Royal decree, establishing the freedom of the Drama, did away with the former paucity of Paris as to places of amusement ; and, in that year alone, eighteen new theatres were added to those already in existence and old ones sometimes changed their names.

The Opera was known as *L'Académie Royale de Musique*. Then the King, having displeased his people and fled to Varennes, it became simply, the *Opera*. Then the King, having once more pleased his subjects, they graciously permitted a return to *L'Académie Royale*. Then, a month later, in October, 1791, it became the *Opera-National*, and later the *Théâtre des Arts*, all of which changes foreshadowed in a way an era of Revolution, and the next change of title was to that of the *Théâtre de la République et des Arts*, which yet was not final. Meanwhile, what of the dancers ?

Guimard had left the stage in 1790. Two years later the leaders of the ballet were Mlle Miller (later to become Madame Pierre de Gardel), Mlle Saulnier, Mlle Roze, Madame Perignon, Mlle Chevigny.

Pierre Gardel, born in 1758 at Nancy, had been *maître de ballet* at the Opera from 1787, and had produced *Telemaque*, *Psyche* and other ballets, out of which he made a fortune. *Psyche*, alone, was given nearly a thousand times. In most of them Madame Gardel appeared, and with remarkable success. At fifty she was still admired, as she had been at twenty. She was an excellent mime, a graceful dancer in all styles, seemed in each new rôle to surpass herself, and Noverre, describing her feet, said "they glittered like diamonds."

Then there were the brothers Malter, the one known as "the bird," the other as "the Devil," because he usually played the rôles of demons.

Madame Perignon, who succeeded Madame Dauberaval (*née* Mlle Théodore), was a dancer of talent, but was considerably surpassed by Mlle Chevigny, of whom an

eye-witness of her dancing remarked : “*Quelle verve ! quelle gaîté dans le comique ! dans les rôles sérieux, quelle chaleur ! quel pathétique ! Tout le feu d'une véritable actrice brillait dans ses beaux yeaux.*”

Then there were Mlles Peslin, Coulon, Clotilde, Beaupré, Branchu, Chameroy ; Gosselin, who, despite *embonpoint*, was so supple as to win the nickname “the Boneless” ; Fanny Bias, and Bigottini ; and M. Laborie, who in 1790 had “created” the title-rôle in *Zephyre* : Messieurs Lany, Dauberval ; Deshayes, a marvel of soaring agility ; Henry, whose mobile figure recalled “*le grand Dupré*” ; Didelot and Duport ; Auguste Vestris, with whom we have already dealt ; and Lepicq, known as the “*Apollo*” of the Dance.

Through the Revolution the theatres had been open, and had been full. The people had gone mad with lust for blood and lust for power ; but the dancers continued to maintain their *aplomb* in difficult *poses*, and to pick their steps more carefully amid the lit and flowered splendours of the theatre, than statesmen could theirs upon the blood-stained, slippery mire of current and ever-changing policies.

France might hold its fantastic State Ballet, the “*Fête of Reason*,” indeed, might go stark mad, and all Law, Order and Reason itself be overthrown, but one man, the greatest world-man then known to history, was gathering strength to bring order out of chaos, to re-make a nation and a nation’s laws and set the world a-wondering if he should master it.

Strangest of all, perhaps, that he, the great Napoleon, should have found time to flirt with a ballet-dancer—the famous Bigottini, of whom the Countess Nesselrode said in one of her letters that the effect she produced with her dancing and mime was so moving as to make even the most hardened weep.

But she seemed rather to have amused Napoleon, more especially when, having told the President of the Legislative Chamber, Fontanes, to send her a present, she received a collection of French classics ; and, on being asked later by Napoleon—unaware of the nature

of the gift—if she was content with Fontanes' choice, she exclaimed that she was not entirely.

"How so?" asked Napoleon. To which Mlle Bigottini replied :

"Il m'a payée en *livres*: j'aurais mieux aimé en *francs*."

In spite of the library, Mlle Bigottini became a millionaire—in francs!

Through the Revolutionary and Napoleonic period, the art of Ballet as seen in Paris was really of little artistic interest, and was to remain so until the late 'thirties of last century. The dancers were mechanical; the ballets, uninspired; the mounting, meretricious; and it was not until the 'thirties that a new, and all-surpassing *danseuse*, Marie Taglioni, came to infuse a revivifying spirit into the art, and to found a tradition that is still of influence to-day.



*BOOK III*

*THE TAGLIONI ERA*



## CHAPTER XXI

### THE EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY

**I**N London, Ballet was in almost the same state as in Paris, but not quite, possibly because having been always imported at its best, it had had less opportunity of becoming hidebound by tradition at its worst as in the case of an old established Continental school.

For the continued production of soundly artistic ballet the existence of a good school is a necessity, a school founded and sustained on right principles. But in its continued existence is, inevitably, some danger of ultimate stultification, from the "setting" of the very tradition it has created, unless there is an occasional infusion of new ideas.

In Paris the new idea was not then encouraged ; it ran counter to the traditional technique, of which the Vestris, father and son, were the supreme exponents. In London there was more freedom, because of less tradition ; and though we had to wait until the mid-forties for productions that were, to the Londoners of the early Victorian period, what the Russian Ballet has been to the present generation, there was some fairly sound work seen in London from 1795 to 1840.

Among ballets composed by Didelot and produced at the King's Theatre, Haymarket, from 1796 to 1800, were : "*Sappho and Phaon*," grand ballet érotique, *en quatre actes* : "*L'Amour Vengé*," ballet épisodique, *en deux actes*, *dans le genre anacreontique* : "*Flore et Zephire*," ballet-divertissement, in one act ; *The Happy Shipwreck*, or *The Scotch Witches*, a dramatic ballet in three acts ; and *Laura et Lenza*, or *The Troubadour*, a grand ballet in two acts, "performed for the first time for the benefit of Madame Hilligsberg," who played Laura.

*Laura et Lenza* is of particular interest, for, in addition to Didelot, who played the troubadour hero, "*Lenza*," among the performers was Deshayes—a capable dancer and producer of Ballet in London and Paris ; and also a Mr. D'Egville, bearer of a name well known in the dancing profession up to modern times.

*Flora et Zephire* was the most popular, and was frequently revived even as late as the 'thirties, when Marie Taglioni made her *début* in it at King's Theatre, for Laporte's benefit, on June 3rd, 1830.

Both in Paris and London, however, during the first two decades of the nineteenth century Ballet was comparatively undistinguished, and it is not really until the 'thirties that it began to assume new interest. True, there were in Paris some remarkable exponents of advanced technique as regards dancing, but in the glamour of technical achievement the full scope of the art of Ballet was somewhat obscured.

At the Paris Opera the “*dieux de la danse*” were MM. Albert, Paul and Ferdinand, all of whom visited London from time to time and the second of whom was known as “*l'aérien*,” a descriptive nickname emphasised by the quaint criticism of a contemporary who wrote : “Paul used to spring and bound upwards, and was continually in the clouds ; his foot scarcely touched the earth or rather the stage ; he darted up from the ground and came down perpendicularly, after *travelling a quarter of an hour in the air !*”

M. Paul, by the way, later became a celebrated dancing-master at Brighton, in good Queen Victoria's early days. Then, too, there was Paul's sister who became Madame Montessu, hardly less celebrated than her brilliant brother. Then, too, Mlle Brocard, who so won Queen Victoria's girlish admiration that some of her dolls were dressed to represent the pretty dancer in character.

Another famous artist of the period was M. Coulon, to whose careful tuition the graceful and *élégante* Pauline Duvernay owed much of her success ; as did also the sisters Noblet-Lise, and Alexandrine, the latter of whom forsook the dance to become an actress.

Of Lise Noblet a contemporary chronicler wrote in 1821 : “Encore un phénix ! Une danseuse qui ne fait jamais de faux pas, qui préfère le cercle d'amis à la foule des amants, qui vient au théâtre à pied, et qui

retourne de même ! ” In 1828, she created, with immense success, the rôle of Fenella, in *La Muette de Portici*, and was described as “ le dernier produit de l’école française aux poses géométriques et aux écarts à l’angle droit ” ; the same critic drawing an interesting comparison between the old school and the rising new one, in adding : “ Déjà, Marie Taglioni, s’avancait sur la pointe du pied—blanche vapeur baignée de mous-selines transparentes—poétique, nébuleuse, immatérielle comme ces fées dont parle Walter Scott, qui errent la nuit près des fontaines et portent en guise de ceinture un collier de perles de rosée ! . . . ”

“ Lise Noblet se résolut, non sans combat, à prouver qu’il y a au monde quelque chose de plus agréable qu’une femme qui tourne sur l’ongle de l’orteil avec une jambe parallèle à l’horizon, dans l’attitude d’un compas faréc. Elle céda, à Fanny Elssler, ‘ Fenella ’ de la Muette qu’elle avait créée, et lui prit en échange—‘ El Jales de Jérès.’ ‘ Las Boleros de Cadiz,’ ‘ La Madrileña,’ et toutes sortes d’autres cachuchas et fandangoes. Grâce à ces concessions, Mdlle Noblet resta qu’en 1840, attachée à l’Opéra.”

These references to contrast of styles, to Scott, and to Spanish dances are particularly interesting in illuminating the change which was coming over the Ballet about 1820–1830.

Mere technical display as the chief aim of the dancer was beginning to fail. The Dance had become too academic, and needed the infusion of a new spirit of grace and freedom. This came, in the form of a sudden craze for national dances, particularly Slav and Spanish ; and in the craze for Scott and all his works, which undoubtedly became an influence on Opera and Ballet, as they did on all the artistic forces which led to the growth of the great Romantic movement, of which Hugo was to be hailed as leader, and of which the effects, passing on through the Art and Literature of the ‘fifties, ‘sixties and ‘seventies, can still perhaps be traced to-day.

Much of the popularity of the Spanish and Slav dances

Both sisters, after acquiring considerable fame in Germany, came to London, and it was here, in 1834, that Véron, the manager of the Paris Opera, came over to tempt them to appear in Paris with a salary of forty thousand francs, twenty thousand each. Thinking to impress the young Viennese with an example of Parisian magnificence, Véron gave a dinner-party in their honour at the Clarendon in Bond Street, to which the best available society was invited, and the menu, wine and equipage were of unparalleled quality. At dessert an attendant brought a silver salver piled high with costly presents for the ladies of the company—pearls, rubies, diamonds, superbly set—a miniature Golconda, which somehow fell a trifle flat. The Elssler girls, true to their simple German training, drank only water with their dinner ; and with the dessert merely accepted, the one a hatpin and the other a little handbag ; and they would not agree to sign their contract until the day of Véron's departure !

Both in Paris and London the sisters were triumphantly successful, and when, in 1841, they toured through America they met with a reception that was sensational. It was “ roses, roses all the way ” ; and in some of the towns triumphal arches were erected. At Philadelphia



CARLOTTA GRISI

Born 1821, died 1899. Who created the title rôle in the dramatic ballet of *Giselle*, 1841. (From a lithograph.)



FANNY CERITO

Famous for her performance in the ballets of *Alma* in 1842 and *Ondine* in 1844.  
From a contemporary engraving.

their horses were unharnessed, and their carriage drawn by the admiring populace, headed by the Mayor !

Fanny was an especial favourite, and when the sisters left New Orleans, some niggers, who were hoisting freight from the hold of an adjacent steamboat, thus chanted, as the vessel bearing the dancers left the wharf :

“ Fanny, is you going up de ribber ?  
Grog time o’ day.  
When all dese here’s got Elssler fever ?  
Oh, hoist away !  
De Lor’ knows what we’ll do widout you,  
Grog time o’ day.  
De toe an’ heel won’t dance widout you,  
Oh, hoist away !  
Day say you dances like a fedder,  
Grog time o’ day.  
Wid t’ree t’ousand dollars all togedder.  
Oh, hoist away ! ”

As a dancer, Fanny excelled in all spirited and national dances, such as the Fandango and the Cachucha, while in the Mazurka and the Cracovienne she stirred her audience to a frenzy of admiration.

Fanny Elssler was at her best in the ballet of *Le Diable aux Boiteaux*, the plot of which is founded on Le Sage’s famous romance. An enthusiastic contemporary described her in the following quaint terms : “ *La Fanny* is tall, beautifully formed, with limbs that strongly resemble the hunting Diana, combining strength with the most delicate and graceful style. Her small and classically shaped head is placed on her shoulders in a singularly elegant manner ; the pure fairness of her skin requires no artificial whiteness ; while her eyes beam with a species of playful malice, well suited to the half-ironical expression at times visible in the corners of her finely curved lips. Her rich, glossy hair, of bright chestnut hue, is usually braided over a forehead formed to wear, with equal grace and dignity, the diadem of a queen or the floral wreath of a nymph ; and, though strictly feminine in her appearance, none can so well or

so advantageously assume the custume of the opposite sex."

Thérèse Elssler retired from the stage in 1850. Fanny, a year later, married a rich banker, withdrew, and died in 1884.

## CHAPTER XXII

*CARLO BLASIS, 1803-1878*

DURING the past two centuries the Ballet had reached the point when, unable to attain to greater perfection of technique, it needed fresh artistic inspiration. Italy, however, had long been degenerate as regards the Dance, her whole artistic ambition having expressed itself in Opera and in unrivalled excellence of vocal technique, so that, towards the end of the eighteenth century and for most of the nineteenth, her singers were unmatched throughout the world.

The introduction of French dancers, and the production of ballets by French composers, turned the attention of the lovers of *bel Canto* to the possibilities of the sister art. Noverre had produced some of his ballets at Milan, and appreciation of his methods and artistic taste gradually spread through Italy, his influence being further extended by several of his Italian pupils, such as Rossi and Angiolini.

It was not, however, until Carlo Blasis came to preside over the Imperial Academy of Dancing and Pantomime at Milan in 1837 that the Italian Ballet began to assume any importance ; and then the Milan Academy, becoming recognised as the first in Europe, began to influence Paris, London, and other capitals of the world. Indeed, it is hardly too much to say that probably every opera house which has been established a century owes something, directly or indirectly, to the genius of Carlo Blasis who, in his enthusiasm for, and sound appreciation of, the Dance and Ballet, as well as in his ability to write thereon, was another Noverre, but with an even wider range of talent and scholarship.

In the history of art there can be few records of such amazing power of assimilation, combined with so high a standard of achievement. We have but to glance at a list of Blasis' works to realise this. While the theory and practice of dancing were his leading theme, one to which he returned again and again, few things failed to stimulate his interest and his pen.

*Observations sur le Chant et sur l'Expression de la Musique Dramatique* was the title of a series of essays contributed to a London paper. He wrote considerably on the art of Mime. He contributed biographies of Garrick and of Fuseli to a Milan periodical ; and another of Pergolesi to a German paper. A dissertation on " Italian Dramatic Music in France " was another of his subjects. He left, in manuscript, works on François Premier ; on Lucan, and his poem of Pharsalia ; on Alexander the Great ; on " the Influence of the Italian Genius upon the World " ; on the then " Modern Greek Dances " ; on " La Grande Epoque de Louis XV en France, en Italie, et en Angleterre " ; a " Lexicon of Universal Erudition " ; while, according to contemporary criticism, perhaps the greatest of his works was *L'Uomo Fisico, Intellectuale e Morale*, a book of some thousand pages.

His education had been of a kind that should incline him to take, as Bacon did, " all knowledge " for his province. Madrolle, the famous French publicist of his period, described Blasis as " a man of the most comprehensive mind that he had ever known," and further declared him " a universal genius." Indeed, though he achieved fame as a *maitre de ballet*, he seems really to have been a sort of super-*maitre* of all the arts.

Carlo was born at Naples on November 4th, 1803, the son of Francesco Blasis and Vincenza Blasis, both, it is said, of noble descent. The family claimed an ancestry reaching back beyond the reigns of Tiberius and Augustus, when there were patricians known as the Blasii. Machiavelli mentions the same family, and various monuments in Italy and Sicily bear the name of De Blasis.

When Carlo was two years old, his father, who had forsaken the ancestral profession of the sea for literature and music, took his family from Naples to Marseilles, where the " De " was dropped for political reasons and the name became simply " Blasis." Having studied the tastes and tendencies of his children somewhat carefully, Francesco determined to give his son Carlo a thorough

grounding in the classics and the fine arts. His daughter Teresa was taught singing and the pianoforte ; and his youngest daughter Virginia, born at Marseilles, was destined to Opera. It must be set to the credit of the fond father's discernment and influence that each of his children achieved distinction in their own sphere and day.

The education of Carlo, we are told in a contemporary biography, "was at once literary and artistic and theatrical." He showed such enthusiasm and ability in his studies that it was said that he might easily have become a painter, a composer of music, or a dancer and ballet-master. He finally chose the last as his profession owing to the fact that it then offered more lucrative prospects, as well as combining all the varied opportunities for artistic expression for which he yearned. In other directions his general education was not neglected, and the subjects he studied all came to be employed in the profession he had chosen, rendering him valuable assistance in dancing, pantomime and the composition of ballets. In later life, when asked how he came to get through such masses of work, he used to declare : "*Le temps ne manque jamais à qui sait l'employer,*" and to add Tissot's saying : "*Dormons, dormons très peu ; vivons toute notre vie, et pendant trois semaines que nous avons à vivre, ne dormons pas, ne soyons pas morts, pendant quinze jours.*" Indeed, he lived every minute of his incessantly active life, and in his later years seldom worked less than fifteen hours a day.

As a lad he studied music in all branches with his father. Drawing, painting, modelling, architecture, geometry, mathematics, anatomy, literature and dancing he studied with some of the best available masters of his period, at Marseilles, Rome, Florence, Bordeaux, Bologna and Pavia ; and when he came to practise his profession as ballet-master and composer, he was able not only to evolve the plot of the ballet, to explain every situation and teach every step, gesture and expression, but to furnish designs for the costumes, scenery and mechanical effects.

Young Blasis was eager to learn, and absorbed something of value from all with whom he came in contact. He haunted artists' studios and made a special point of visiting all he could in any town in which he happened to stay, Thorwaldsen, Longhi and Canova being among the more prominent of the sculptors and artists whom he came to know. He became a connoisseur and collector of paintings, sculpture, carvings, cameos, jewellery, old instruments ; had a remarkable library, not only of books in Greek, Latin, Italian, French, English, German and Spanish, but an interesting collection of music, from Palestrina to his contemporaries, his library and gallery being valued at about ten thousand pounds.

He started his professional career and travels at the age of twelve, when he appeared as a dancer, first in the leading theatre at Marseilles, then at Aix, Avignon, Lyon, Toulouse : finally settling with his family for some time at Bordeaux, where he had a very successful *début* and where—under the able direction of Dauberval, of whom we have already heard most of the best dancers in France appeared, preparatory to an engagement in Paris.

Blasis then received an invitation to the capital, where his *début* was so extraordinarily successful that he was promptly placed in the front rank, and for a time studied under the famous Gardel, who thought so highly of him that he selected for him, as partner in several ballets, Mlle Gosselin, one of the leading dancers at the Opera, who was followed by Mlle Legallois, a dancer of the classic school.

On account of intrigues and cabals—which are not, alas, unusual in the theatrical profession, or perhaps in any other—Blasis left the opera, and was next engaged at Milan, first making a successful tour, during which he composed various ballets, notably *Iphigénie in Aulide*, *La Vestale*, *Fernando Cortez*, *Castor and Pollux*, *Don Juan* and *Les Mystères d'Isis*.

His appearance at La Scala, Milan, was triumphant, and he remained there for fourteen seasons as dancer

and ballet-composer. Then followed another successful Italian tour. Painters, sculptors and engravers as well as various poets celebrated his progress, and one Venetian painter, having seen him dancing some *pas de deux* with his famous partner, Virginia Leon, in which they entwined and enveloped themselves in rose-coloured veils—presumably very much as Mordkin and Pavlova did in the *L'Automne Bacchanale*, made sketches of the various graceful groupings, and afterwards introduced them into the decorations of an apartment in the house of a rich Venetian nobleman.

There can be no doubt that, to artists, the appeal of Blasis' work was greatly due, not merely to his technical excellence as a dancer, but to the fact that—steeped as he was in the study of music, sculpture and painting—his work was a living expression of a classic tradition.

Again and again in his writings he impresses on the young dancer the necessity for studying not only music, but drawing, painting and sculpture. In one interesting passage especially, he remarks : “ It is in the best productions of painting and sculpture that the dancer may study with profit how to display his figure with taste and elegance. They are a fountain of beauties to which all those should repair who wish to distinguish themselves for the correctness and purity of their performances. In the Bacchanalian groups which I have composed, I have successfully introduced various attitudes, arabesques and groupings, the original idea of which was suggested to me during my journey to Naples and through *Magna Grecia*, on viewing the paintings, bronzes and sculptures rescued from the ruins of Herculaneum.”

The publication at Milan of his first work : *A Theoretical, Practical and Elementary Treatise on the Art of Dancing*, brought Blasis into prominent notice through the Continent and in London, owing to press-notices and demands for translations of a work that was unrivalled of its kind, and is still valuable to-day.

In 1826 Blasis came to London where, at the King's Theatre, Haymarket, he was triumphantly received as

dancer, actor and ballet-composer. He remained here for some time, and in 1829-1830 published in English his still more important work, namely : *The Code of Terpsichore*, in which the whole subject of dancing is dealt with exhaustively. The book was illustrated by numerous line-engravings, accompanied by music composed by his sisters, Virginia and Teresa Blasis, and was dedicated to Virginia, then *prima donna* of the Italian Opera at Paris. The work achieved an immediate success, and did much to further the aim which Blasis had in all his writings, namely, the raising of the arts of the Dance and Ballet to a level with the other arts.

The *maitre* now divided his time between England and Italy, sometimes appearing as a dancer, sometimes producing ballets of his own composition ; or yet again, as journalist and author, contributing articles to leading reviews or seeing some fresh volume through the Press, always occupied in propagating his school and principles, demonstrating his method and putting into practice wherever he went every new improvement or suggestion which could advance the cause he had at heart ; always encouraging and inspiring all of his profession with a newer and higher idea of the possibilities of theatrical Dance and Ballet. It was now said, indeed, that "all who followed the same profession became either his disciples or imitators."

His triumphs as a dancer, however, were unhappily cut short during an engagement at the San Carlo, Naples, by an accident which occurred during rehearsal, some injury to the left leg, for which every remedy was tried without avail. Though henceforth he was not unable to perform the simpler and more natural movements, he found himself handicapped by a certain stiffness that made anything like a *cabriole* or *entrechat* impossible, and wisely decided to retire rather than diminish the fame he had already acquired as a dancer. Hereafter it was as a composer of ballets, and as a widely informed writer on the arts that he occupied himself, and in Italy, France and England—notably at Drury Lane—

his productions, both on the stage and in the Press, won him increasing recognition and respect.

In 1837 Blasis was appointed by the Italian Government Director of the Imperial Academy of Dancing and Pantomime at Milan, where the reforms he introduced and the new artistic ideal he created shortly raised it to the position of the leading Academy of the world.

By the end of the eighteenth century, dancing and ballet at the Paris Opera had grown, as we have seen, a stiff, formal, dull affair. Carlo Blasis' *régime* at the Milan Academy, which put new life into the art, had a tremendous influence throughout the Continent, so much so that Russia, Austria, Germany, France and even England, all to-day owe something to the traditions of style and efficiency his genius and experience then laid down.

The system of training he instituted then is still much the same in modern opera houses. Pupils entered the Milan Academy at an early age. No one was admitted before the age of eight years, nor after twelve, if a girl, or fourteen, if a boy. They were to be medically examined, proved to have a robust constitution, and to be in good health. They had to be children of respectable parents ; and, when admitted, were to remain in the school, devoted to its service and to the service of the theatre for eight years. For the first three years they were to be considered as apprentices, and receive no salary ; those who were qualified for performance in the theatre came to receive progressive salaries. Their daily practice in the school was for three hours in the morning, from nine to twelve, at dancing ; after which they were to be exercised in the art of Mime for one hour. To-day the training is just as severe, and much the same.

A noted Italian *maître de ballet* at a famous West End theatre once told me that he always practised dancing from two to three hours a day, and "pantomime"—or "mime"—from one to two hours. Mme Genée, too, has stated how she used to practise from two to three hours daily. Such practice is necessary, not merely to a pupil but to a finished and successful dancer, in order to

keep the limbs absolutely supple, and to enable the artist to give that impression of consummate ease in performing the most difficult *pas* which is the true test of the really great dancer ; while the study of "mime" is equally necessary, since it is that art which gives life and expression to the dance.

Before a dancer has achieved the distinction of becoming a "star," it may be safely reckoned that she has had from eight to ten years' daily drudgery, and that her earlier years have been without financial reward, and may even have involved her parents or relatives in considerable expense for her training or apprenticeship. Given the physique, the instinct for dancing and the intelligence, what, then, must the prospective "star" expect before she can become a *première danseuse*, or even a *seconde* ?

Go into any large school where operatic dancing is taught and what will you see ? A large, barely furnished room, on one or two, or perhaps on all, sides of which is fixed a bar or pole, some four feet from the ground. Here, having already been thoroughly grounded in the traditional "five positions," the pupils, perhaps a dozen or more in number, ranging from eight upwards, will be found at "side practice," going through the various "positions" and steps, while one hand rests on the bar. Here one goes through the fatiguing and endless training known as practice "on the *barre*," learning *battements*, which consist in moving one leg in the air, now forward, now back, while the other, on tip-toe, supports the body ; learning the even more difficult *ronds des jambes*, or circles made by one leg while resting on the other ; learning all the while to get the legs free and supple, to keep the shoulders down and elbows loose, before proceeding to the more complex steps, poses, *enchaînements*.

After this incessant drilling in side-practice, comes the "centre practice," in which many of the same positions and steps are repeated, with new and more difficult ones, away from the bar ; until little by little after months, indeed, it may be years, of such practice, the young

dancer becomes qualified to take a place in the minor ranks of the ballet where, in watching the more finished work of the *première danseuse*, she is further inspired to yet more arduous practice in the school or at home, in the hope of achieving a perfection that shall bring her similar rewards—a princely income, unlimited bouquets and the clamorous applause of an adoring audience.

All this is severe enough training ; but the dancer's training has always been severe. The hard thing, from the ballet composer's point of view, is—that the individuality and artistic spirit of the dancer is, only too often, crushed by the training, or at least subordinated to an exaltation of mere *technique*. *Technique* is a necessity, of course. But it was in the power of such men as Noverre and Blasis to inspire in their disciples something more than an emulation for technical efficiency, and to give them an artistic ideal which made the drudgery of their training seem worth while as a means of attaining to greater ease of artistic expression. Blasis' influence undoubtedly ran like a quickening spirit through the capitals of Europe, and led the way to that great revival of romantic ballet which marked the era of the 'forties and found its fullest and most poetic expression in the idealism of Taglioni.

## CHAPTER XXIII

*MARIE TAGLIONI, 1804-1884 : "SYLPHIDE"*

**T**HE theatrical sensation of the early Victorian period was the famous *pas de quatre* of 1845. It was composed of Lucile Grahn, Fanny Cerito, Carlotta Grisi, and Marie Taglioni, the last-named making a welcome return to the stage after an absence of some years. Taglioni's reappearance, and a dispute between the dancers as to the order of their *entrée*, gave the event a handsome advertisement.

In the end the difficulty was settled by Lumley, manager of the Opera, deciding that, as Mlle Taglioni herself was indifferent as to when she made her entrance, they should appear according to age, the youngest first. In consequence, Lucile Grahn led the quartette of famous dancers, a crescendo of applause finishing in a terrific climax as Taglioni, greatest of them all, appeared, and, as one witness declared, "the whole house went clean mad."

Marie Taglioni, greatest of the four, had been the first to inspire the creation of that new school of which the other three were slightly younger representatives. The *technique* of all four was virtually the same, that which had always been traditional. In the foundations of their art all were of the traditional "operatic" school. All had been thoroughly drilled in the eternal "five positions." But in the spirit of this art all were as new for their period, and by contrast with the eighteenth-century school, as Camargo had been when she first quickened that school by the introduction of a fresher inspiration and new miracles of execution ; and as Sallé had been, when she had striven to replace the convention of *pannier* and *cuirasse* for classic hero and heroine, with a costume nearer to Hellenic truth and beauty. And of the four great dancers who made theatrical dancing what it was during the mid-nineteenth century, Taglioni was the pioneer.

She was one of a family of Taglionis. There was Louise, who had won distinction at the Opera under the Empire, and who had a sister so beautiful that when she

left the stage to marry an Italian gentleman and settle down at Venice, it came to be a proverb : "To see Venice, and the beautiful Contarini." Marie was the niece of these two.

Born at Stockholm in 1804, she was the daughter of Philip Taglioni (1777-1871), ballet-master of Milan ; and of a Swedish mother, *née* Anna Karsten, whose grandfather had been a famous actor and singer at the Swedish Court. In these two strains we have one of the secrets of Marie Taglioni's art, for, while from the Italian side she inherited that passion for *technique* which is innate in the Latin races, from the maternal side she would have received the impulse towards poetic idealism characteristic of the North.

Add to this the fact that her father was not only an accomplished teacher of dancing, but was steeped in the romantic legends and poetry of Scandinavia, and we can understand how it was that the stiff formalism and poetic conventionalities of Ballet in the pre-Taglioni period succumbed to the new breath of inspiration which set all London and Paris raving of its beauty in the 'forties, and fired even so temperate and ironic an observer as Thackeray to enthusiastic admiration of Marie Taglioni in *Sylphide*.

As a child she was unprepossessing to look at, not without physical defect. It is said that when the famous dancing-master, Coulon, was consulted as to the teaching of the child, he exclaimed : "What *can* I do with that little hunch-back ? "

Nevertheless, her father intended that she should become a dancer, and, taking her in hand himself, a dancer she became ; with the result that—to adapt the expression of an ingenious French critic—between them they ultimately *taglionised* the Ballet.

Marie made her first appearance at Vienna in 1822, in a ballet bearing the lengthy title, "*Reception d'une jeune nymphe à la cour de Terpsichore*." Her father had arranged a *pas* for her *début*, but in her confusion, it is said, she forgot it and substituted another of her own invention which proved a triumphant success.

From Vienna she went to Stuttgart, where the Queen of Wurtemberg became so attached to her that she treated her like a sister, and actually wept on the occasion of Taglioni's last appearance at the Stuttgart Opera House. She next proceeded to Munich, where she was equally well received by the Royal family, finally making her Parisian *début* on July 23rd, 1827, in a ballet called *Le Sicilien*.

Her appearance was an immediate success, and was followed by fresh triumphs in *La Vestale*, *Fernando Cortez*, *Les Bayadères*, and *Le Carnaval de Venise*, this first engagement terminating on August 10th. One critic of her time writes enthusiastically of the effect she created with : "sa grâce naïve, ses poses décentes et voluptueuses, son extreme légèreté, la nouveauté de sa danse, dont les effets semblaient appartenir aux inspirations de la nature au lieu d'être les résultats des combinaisons de l'art et du travail de l'école, produisirent une sensation très vive sur le public. Le talent d'une virtuose qui s'éloigne de la route battue par ses devanciers, trouve des opposants que la continuité des succès ne désarme pas toujours : il n'y eut qu'une voix sur Mlle Taglioni : tout le monde fut enchanté, ravi."

The Ballet had grown formalised, stale. Taglioni came as a spirit from another sphere to infuse new vitality and idealism into its wearied splendour, and she provided jaded opera lovers with a new thrill. After her Parisian *début*, she was re-engaged for the following year and returned in the April of 1828 to win fresh admiration in *Les Bayadères*, and *Lydie* and *Psyché*; then, in the year after, in *La Belle au Bois Dormant*. A fifteen years' engagement was then offered her at the Opera, with intervals of absence sufficient to enable her to pay visits to Germany, Russia, Italy and England, and in every country she achieved fresh triumphs.

Her London *début* at the benefit of Laporte, manager at Her Majesty's Theatre, took place on June 3rd, 1830, in Didelot's ballet of *Zéphire et Flore*.

A contemporary account of her says : " Taglioni unquestionably combines the finest requisites for eminence in her art. The union she displays of muscular ability with the most feminine delicacy of frame and figure is truly extraordinary. A charming simplicity, the principal characteristic of her demeanour on the stage—an utter absence of that false consequence and *bombast* of carriage and manner which have so peculiarly marked too many artistes of our time ; and a native grace and matchless precision in her movements, even those in which the most astonishing difficulties are conquered and which yet appear to demand of *her* no effort, leave us delighted with the 'fairyism' of the lovely being before us . . . and enchant us into forgetfulness of the unwearied perseverance and application by which, in aid of the lavish gifts of Nature, such unrivalled excellence has been attained."

Every contemporary critic of Taglioni insists always on that one note, the idealism of her art. The late Mme Katti-Lanner, who saw her dance, told me once that she appeared like some fairy-being, always about to soar away from the earth to which she seemed so little to belong. And was it not Victor Hugo who inscribed a volume which he sent to her : " *à vos pieds—à vos ailes*" ? It was but natural, then, that she should be the ideal exponent of the title-rôle in that graceful ballet *Sylphide*, first produced at Paris on March 14th, 1832.

The importance of the new influence brought to bear on the art of Ballet by the advent of Taglioni, and the contrast between the older and the newer schools was well defined by Théophile Gautier who, writing of *Sylphide*, said : " Ce ballet commença pour la chorégraphie une ère toute nouvelle et ce fut par lui que le romantisme s'introsuisait dans le domaine de Terpsichore. A dater de la *Sylphide*, les *Filets de Vulcain*, *Flore et Zephire* ne furent plus possible : l'Opéra fut livré aux gnomes, aux ondins, aux salamandres, aux elfes, aux nixes, aux willis, aux péris et à tout ce peuple, étrange et mystérieux, qui se prête si merveilleusement

aux fantaisies du maître de ballet. Les douze maisons de marbre et d'ore de Olympies furent reléguées dans la poussière des magasins, et l'on ne commanda plus aux décorateurs que des forêts romantiques, que des vallées éclairées par le joli clair de lune allemand des ballades de Henri Heine. . . ."

The poet Méry remarked of the new dancer : " *Avec Mlle Taglioni la danse s'est élevée à la sainteté d'un art.*" That is just what she achieved. Dancing, which had become mainly a display of technical *tours de force*, was restored to the dignity, if not exactly the " sanctity," of an art. But her influence extended further. She enlarged the perspective of the stage effects. The stiff formalism of " classic " scenes, of neat temples and trim vistas gave place to mysterious lakes and umbrageous forests, vast spaces that stirred the imagination, and prepared the mind for the *entrée* of visionary dancers.

The story of *Sylphide* is of the love of a sylph for a handsome young Highland peasant, who is haunted by visions of her in his dreams, and memories of the vision on awakening, so much so, that the heart of his own betrothed is broken and his brain is turned by the manifestation of his aerial love, who herself becomes the victim of an unhappier fate by a terrible spell cast on her by infernal powers and woven during a witches' sabbath which forms one of the more impressive scenes of the ballet.

The plot of the ballet was adapted by Adolphe Nourrit from Charles Nodier's story, *Trilby*, and the music by Schneitzhöffer was pronounced " excellent " by Castil-Blaze, who remarked that it was an " *Oeuvre infiniment remarquable dans un genre qui peut devenir important lors qu'un homme de talent et d'esprit veut bien l'adopter.*" He also reports of the first production of *Sylphide* in Paris, that it had a " *succès merveilleux.*"

Elsewhere Taglioni's success was no less remarkable. Indeed, wheresoever she went she achieved a triumph. At St. Petersburg, such tempting offers were made by the Emperor and Empress that she prolonged her stay for three years, and left laden with gifts from their



#### LUCILE GRAHN

The famous Danish dancer of the mid-19th century dancing, with "Perron," a *pas de deux* in the ballet of *Catarina, ou la Fille du Bogaard*. From a lithograph by Brandard.



THE FAMOUS *PAS DE QUATRE* OF 1845

Composed by Jules Perrot, and danced by Marie Taglioni, Carlotta Grisi, Fanny Cerito and Lucile Grahn at Her Majesty's Theatre, London on July 12th, 1845

Imperial Majesties. At Vienna, on one occasion, having been called before the curtain twenty-two times, when she finally got away from the Opera House her carriage was drawn to her hotel by forty young men of the leading Austrian families. In London she was worshipped by the public, and was one of the special admirations of the youthful Queen Victoria, some of whose dolls, dressed to represent the characters Taglioni played, may be seen to-day in the London Museum.

Taglioni was married to Gilbert, Comte de Voisins, in 1835, but the marriage was not a happy one, and was dissolved in 1844. Taglioni retired for a little time, but returned to the stage again and appeared in London, with triumphant success in the famous *pas de quatre* of 1845.

The climax of a great season came in July of that year when, at the request of Her Majesty Queen Victoria, the *pas de quatre* was arranged for the four great dancers, Taglioni, Cerito, Carlotta Grisi and Lucile Grahn. One critic remarked that the appearance of four such stars on the same boards and in the same *pas* was "truly what our Gallic neighbours called *une solemnité théâtrale*, and such a one as none of those who beheld it are likely to witness again."

It was, he declared rightly, "an event unparalleled in theatrical annals, and one which, some two score years hence, may be handed down to a new generation by garrulous septuagenarians as one of the most brilliant reminiscences of days gone by," and all who have studied theatrical history at all can freely endorse the remark. Probably never in any theatre was seen such excitement as there was on this occasion. Contemporary testimony, when authoritative, is always valuable in such cases, and, as there is no better account of the famous *pas de quatre* than that given by the *Illustrated London News* of July 19th, 1845, it may be quoted at length with advantage.

Speaking of the curiosity which so unusual an event must necessarily excite, and which led him to "hurry" to the theatre, the writer declared that : "curiosity and every other feeling was merged in admiration when the

their utmost resources, there was a simplicity and ease the absence of which would have completely broken the spell they threw around the scene. Of the details of this performance it is difficult to speak. In the *solo* steps executed by each *danseuse*, each in turn seemed to claim pre-eminence. Where every one in her own style is perfect, peculiar individual taste alone may balance in favour of one or the other, but the award of public applause must be equally bestowed ; and, for our own part, we confess that our *penchant* for the peculiar style, and our admiration for the dignity, the repose, and exquisite grace which characterise Taglioni, and the dancer who has so brilliantly followed the same track (Lucile Grahn), did not prevent our warmly appreciating the charming archness and twinkling steps of Carlotta Grisi, or the wonderful flying leaps and revolving bounds of Cerito. Though, as we have said, each displayed her utmost powers, the emulation of the fair dancers was, if we may trust appearances, unaccompanied by envy.

" Every time a shower of bouquets descended, on the conclusion of a solo *pas* of one or other of the fair *ballerine*, her sister dancers came forward to assist her in collecting them ; and both on Saturday and Tuesday did Cerito offer to crown Taglioni with a wreath which had been thrown in homage to the queen of the dance. We were also glad to see on the part of the audience far less of partisanship than had been displayed two or three years since, on the performance of a *pas de deux* between Elssler and Cerito. The applause was universal, and equally distributed. This, however, did not take from the excitement of the scene. The house, crowded to the roof, presented a concourse of the most eager faces, never diverted for a moment from the performance ; and the extraordinary tumult of enthusiastic applause, joined to the delightful effect of the spectacle presented, imparted to the whole scene an interest and excitement that can hardly be imagined."

Yet another triumph for Ballet was scored in the following season, July, 1846, when Taglioni's appearance in *La Gitana* having been hailed with quite extraordinary enthusiasm, there came a piece of managerial enterprise equalling that of the famous *pas de quatre*.

A new ballet by Perrot, *Les Tribulations d'un Maître de Ballet*, was arranged for production, and, during the performance, a *pas* was to have been introduced, combining the matchless three—Grahn, Cerito and Taglioni, supported also by the niece of the last-named, Louise Taglioni ; and by St. Leon, husband of Cerito ; and Perrot, husband of Carlotta Grisi.

This *pas* for the leading dancers was intended to form part of a *divertissement* entitled *Le Jugement de Paris*, which the aforesaid *maître de ballet* was supposed to be arranging, not without "tribulations." But on putting the *divertissement* into rehearsal the idea was found to be so attractive and to assume such importance as to overshadow the rest of the production ; and the *Jugement de Paris* was therefore detached and staged as a separate ballet in itself, with the happiest result.

The *pas* so isolated was, of course, the famous *Pas des Déesses*, the goddesses naturally being the fair rivals Juno, Minerva and Venus, impersonated by the three great *ballerines*, who contended for the apple thrown by the Goddess of Discord, and awarded by Paris to the most beautiful of the three.

Needless to say, with such dancers, the production found favour with audiences and critics, one of whom wrote : “ The idea of this *pas* is an excellent one ; for it is an important qualification in choreographic compositions, that the dancing should appear to be a necessary result of the action—that an intelligible idea should be conveyed by it, and a story kept up throughout. Without this, dancing, however beautiful in itself, loses half its charm to those who look for something more in it than mere power and grace of motion. Here there is a purpose in the varied attitudes and graceful evolutions of each *danseuse*, as she is supposed to be endeavouring to outstrip her rivals, and vindicate her right to the disputed apple ; and the effect is a charming one, independently of the interest and excitement that must inevitably attach to the combined performance of such unequalled artists as these. . . . ”

“ Taglioni is, however, the principal ‘ star ’ at the present moment. Those who have visited Her Majesty’s Theatre predetermined to find her marvellous talent diminished and to ‘ regret ’ her reappearance on the English stage, have come away enchanted, despite themselves, at that marvellous union of unrivalled agility with the most perfect grace and elegance, in which no dancer has as yet equalled her. If there is any change perceptible, she seems to have advanced in her art—in person, an increase of *embonpoint* has proved decidedly favourable to her appearance. It is, no doubt, in the *danse noble* that she excels ; but in every style of dancing the *je ne sais quoi* of peculiar refinement and grace for which she is remarkable in her style, distinguishes her. As long as Taglioni continues to dance, she will continue to excite an enthusiasm of applause, as the famous Guimard, styled in 1770, ‘ La Reine de la

Danse,' had done before her. A peculiar gentleness and amiability of look, and a dignity of manner which never abandons Taglioni, is in admirable keeping with the style of her dancing ; and, if we may believe report, these do not belie her real character."

As a matter of fact, the appearances and "report" did *not* belie her character, for Taglioni always won the respect and love of all she met. She had done so abroad, where crowned heads and Royal families had made a friend of her, enchanted with her modesty and charm, and won to equal respect by her innate dignity of character.

It was the same in London, where, it is said, she received not only the generous homage of her stage colleagues, and was offered a superb testimonial at the close of the season of 1846, but also met with special favour from Queen Victoria herself, who was as much a connoisseur of good dancing as she was of character.

It may have been by reason of this that Taglioni was appointed teacher of dancing and " deportment " to some of the younger members of the English Royal Family ; and later undertook the tuition of a few favoured young dancers. Yet Fortune did not favour her always, and she died at Marseilles on April 25th, 1884, like Guimard also, neglected and in poverty. But while there is one to read the records of the stage her name will survive as one of the supreme exponents of the idealistic school of Ballet.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### CARLOTTA GRISI, FANNY CERITO AND LUCILE GRAHN

A GOOD dancer is seldom also a good singer ; and still more rarely do both talents develop simultaneously to such a point that there can be any serious doubt as to which to relinquish in favour of the other ; yet such was the happy fate of Carlotta Grisi, cousin of the two singing sisters, Giuditta and Giulia Grisi, who were famous in the mid-nineteenth century.

Carlotta, at one time, gave such promise of becoming a vocalist that no less a person than the great Malibran advised her to devote her life to singing. But when the famous ballet-master, Perrot—who had received his *congé* from the Paris Opera—saw her earning her living as a dancer at Naples, he artfully suggested that she should develop both talents, fully intending that, under his tuition, she should become at least a finished *danseuse*, for, in the future of such a pupil, he saw an opportunity of securing his own return to the Opera. Moreover, although “ugly as sin”—as a famous *maitresse de ballet* of our time once described him to me—he became her husband !

Carlotta Grisi was born in 1821 at Visnida in Upper Istria, in a palace built for the Emperor Francis II. When only five years old she was dancing with some other children at the Scala, Milan, where she performed with such outstanding grace that she was nicknamed *La Petite Heberlé*, a Mlle Heberlé being then a rising star. Subsequently she toured with a company through Italy, appearing at Florence, Rome, Naples, and it was here she met and became first the pupil, and then wife, of Perrot.

Visits to London, Vienna, Milan, followed, the young dancer winning fresh laurels at every appearance, until finally she made her Parisian *début* at the Renaissance on February 28th, 1840. Here she appeared both as singer and dancer in *Le Zingaro*, but on the closing of the theatre in February, 1841, she appeared at the Opera

and achieved an immediate success in *La Favorita*. From that moment her career was one of continuous triumph.

Carlotta next appeared—in June of that year—in “*Giselle, Ou les Willis, ballet en deux actes, de MM. de Saint Georges, Th. Gautier et Coralli, musique de M. Adam, décors de M. Ciceri,*” as it is described on the title-page of the original libretto, and her performance in the title rôle was the artistic sensation of the Parisian season.

*Giselle* is founded on one of those romantic, legendary themes in which Germany is so rich, and tells of the fate of a village girl who falls a victim to the mysterious *Willis*, or spirits of betrothed girls who in life were passionately fond of dancing, who have died ere marriage, and are doomed after death to dance every night, from midnight to dawn, luring whom they may to the same fate. This, and the story of shattered hope and love forlorn which bring about poor little *Giselle*'s destruction, are the two leading themes of a ballet which, touching both the heights of gaiety and depths of tragedy, is rich in every element that can interest or charm, and presents many dramatic situations that demand from a supremely accomplished dancer a power of mimic expression, dramatic intensity and poetic sympathy that are rare. Carlotta Grisi was ideally equipped, and she was *par excellence* “*Giselle*.”

Théophile Gautier's admiration for Grisi was enthusiastic. “*Qu'est-ce que Giselle?*” he asked the day after the first performance, thus answering his own question : “*Giselle, c'est Carlotta Grisi, une charmante fille aux yeux bleus, au sourire fin et naif, à la démarche alerte, une Italienne qui a l'air d'une Allemande à s'y tromper, comme l'Allemande Fanny avait l'air d'une Andalouse de Séville. . . . Pour la pantomime, elle a dépassé toutes les espérances. Pas un geste de convention. Pas un mouvement faux. C'est la nature prise sur le fait.*”

An English admirer described Carlotta in the following quaint terms : “. . . a blonde beauty ; her eyes are of a soft and lovely blue, her mouth is small, and

continued undiminished until the fall of the curtain—then the enthusiasm became a *furore*, and the name of 'Grisi' was uttered by a thousand voices. She soon appeared, led on by Petipa, and in looks more expressive than words, spoke her thanks for the kindness which she had received and merited. . . . After the performances, Mr. Bunn gave an elegant supper in the grand saloon of the theatre to about seventy of his friends and patrons. The entertainment was intended as a complimentary leave-taking to Carlotta Grisi, on her quitting London to fulfil her engagements in Paris. After proposing the health of Carlotta Grisi, Mr. Bunn presented that lady with a superb bracelet of black enamel, richly ornamented with diamonds, as a slight souvenir of her highly successful career at Drury Lane Theatre. Attached to the bracelet was the following inscription :

'Présenté à Mdlle Carlotta Grisi, la danseuse la plus poétique de l'univers, avec les hommages respectueux de son directeur A. Bunn, Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, 18th November, 1843.'"

Writing of her in 1846, a contemporary enthusiast remarked : "Her name is henceforth inseparably connected with the charming and poetic creations which her own grace and beauty have immortalised : *Giselle*, *Beatrix*, *La Péri*, have attained a celebrity equal to that of *La Sylphide* and *La Fille du Danube*, and the most devoted admirer of Taglioni can scarcely refuse a tribute of homage to the bewitching elegance of Carlotta Grisi. Wherever she goes, her reception is the same ; if she is idolised in Paris, she is adored in London. The impression produced by her performance of *La Péri* at Drury Lane, in 1843, will not be easily forgotten, and her more recent triumph in the *Pas de Quatre* is still fresh in the recollection of the *habitues* of the Opera. Nor must we omit her last creations of *Mazourka* in the *Diable à Quatre* and *Paquita*. It is impossible to describe the fascinating *naïveté* of her manner, the arch and lively humour of her pantomime, and the extraordinary precision and grace of her dancing !" High praise, certainly ! But evidently not exaggerated, for all contemporary accounts of Grisi are equally enthusiastic.

Carlotta's married life was not entirely happy. She had many admirers and her husband had a temper ; and though she always kept the former at a discreet distance, the latter was not so easily managed ; so, after a few years of marriage, which had apparently been entered upon more as a matter of mutual interest than mutual affection, she and her husband agreed to separate. Grisi left the stage in 1857 at the climax of her success, and retired to live in Switzerland, where she died in 1899.

At the time of the production of the famous *pas de quatre*, Fanny Cerito was an especial favourite with the London audiences, by whom she was always spoken of as the "divine" Fanny. This was but an echo of her fond old father to whom she was always "La Divinita," and who, in the heyday of her success, used

to go about with his pockets stuffed with her old shoes and fragments of the floral crowns which had been thrown to her on the stage. Ever since her birth at Naples in 1821 he had guarded her ; and his pride in her talent and her triumphs was but natural, seeing how young she was, how early she won fame, and how great was her charm.

Cerito made her *début* at the San Carlo, Naples, in 1835, in a ballet called *The Horoscope*. She then toured, appearing at most of the Italian cities. Even before she had left Italy she had earned, on her *début* at Milan, the complimentary title of "the fourth Grace," one of the many "fourth" Graces the world has seen since ancient classic days !

After Italy there followed a couple of years at Vienna and then, strangely enough reversing the customary order of things, she made her London *début* some years before she appeared in Paris, and danced regularly in London for several seasons from 1840 onwards.

In May of the following year, she appeared at Her Majesty's in the *Lac des Fées* with great success ; in the June *Sylphide* was revived for her ; and on August 12th she took her benefit, to which people flocked from all parts of London, and notwithstanding the usual deserted state of town at such a time, the audience was one of the biggest and most fashionable on record.

It was in the two ballets *Alma* and *Ondine* that the lovely Fanny achieved her greatest triumphs, in the former representing a fire-spirit, in the latter a water-nymph who, like Hans Andersen's little Mermaid, was endowed with mortal life and form.

On its first production in London during July, 1842, she appeared in *Alma*, a ballet by Deshayes, on the very night when the famous "Persiani" row took place, which was said to be worse than several similar riots in the previous year at the Opera. Mme Persiani had been "too ill to sing" ; the audience had been incredulous, and an appalling riot ensued. Comparative quiet was at length secured by the respected manager, Lumley, and, as a journal of the time quaintly records :

“A beautiful, sylph-like Cerito danced in the splendid ballet of *Alma*, and by her inspiration hushed the stormy elements with a repose that ought always to reign when genius and talent are supreme.”

Another chronicler speaks of the “new and glittering ballet of *Alma*, which reflects the greatest credit on the inventor, M. Deshayes,” and adds : “We have no hesitation in saying that this is the ballet of all ballets, and carries our memory back to our young, innocent and merry days of juvenility, when care was not care, and tears not tears of woe, to the days of bright sunny smiles, when fairies in our eyes *were* fairies, and when the brilliant realisations of the doings of ‘Cherry and Fair Star’ were real, existing things of creation, and part and parcelling of our then dreamy nature and being. Such is the new ballet of *Alma*. It is one of the best ever put on the opera boards.” That this impression was created was due certainly to the talent, both as actress and dancer, of Cerito, for whom the ballet had been specially composed.

As to her great popularity in London a contemporary record mentions an interesting “fact which will bear testimony at once to her perfect embodiment of the poetry of motion and her excellent private character,” namely, that “The Queen Dowager of England was lately graciously pleased to bestow on her a splendid enamel brooch, set with diamonds, and accompanied by a most flattering message.”

*Alma* was succeeded in the following year by *Ondine*, also composed specially for her by Perrot, with expressive music by Pugni, and produced at Her Majesty’s on June 22nd ; and the production gave Cerito fine opportunities for expressive miming as well as dancing, one of the great moments of the ballet being the scene in which the little naiad realises at last the mortal life which has been given her, when, for the first time, she sees her shadow cast by the moonlight ; and then came one of the chief sensations of the ballet—Cerito’s dancing of the famous *pas de l’ombre*, a thing of such beauty that the audience wished it a joy for ever.

Cerito made her Parisian *début* with success in 1847, in a ballet called *La Fille de Marbre*, composed by St. Léon, when a French critic, speaking of her personal attractions, described her as “*petite et dodue . . . les bras ronds et d'un contour moelleux, les yeux bleus, le sourire facile, la jambe forte, le pied petit mais épais, la chevelure blonde mais rebelle.*” A charming little picture.

Another critic wrote: “Short in stature and round in frame, Cerito is one example of how grace will overcome the lack of personal elegance, how mental animation will convey vivacity and attraction to features which, in repose, are heavy and inexpressive. With a figure which would be too redundant were it not for its extreme flexibility and abandon, Cerito is yet a charming *artiste*, who has honourably earned a high popularity and deservedly retained it.” Some idea of her style as a dancer, as well as of her personal appearance, is afforded by yet another contemporary who described her as “*bondante and abondante.*” Among her other successes were *La Vivandière* and *Le Diable au Violon*. For the last-named the violin was played by St. Léon, violinist and ballet-master, whom she married, but from whom she separated in 1850. In April, 1854, she won a final and very striking success in a ballet, *Gemma*, which she had composed in collaboration with Théophile Gautier—a great admirer of hers; and she retired from the stage later in the same year.

Born at Copenhagen, June 30th, 1821, Lucile Grahn was said to have been so delighted with a ballet to which she was taken when only four years old, that she forthwith insisted on learning to dance, and made her regular theatrical *début* as Cupid when she was seven! Lucile then left the stage for a time in order to pursue her studies as a dancer. After seven years of the usual training she reappeared, at the age of fourteen, first in *La Muette de Portici*; then, with success, in a ballet of her own composition, *Le Cinq Seul*; afterwards creating the rôle of the Princess Astride, in a ballet entitled *Waldemar*; and followed this with the title-rôle in *Hertha*, the two last-named both being Scandinavian in subject.

Then she proceeded to Paris, and after studying awhile under Barrez, was recalled suddenly to Copenhagen to take part in a *fête* arranged in honour of the Queen of Denmark, so did not actually make her Parisian *début* until she appeared at the Opera in *Le Carnaval de Venise* in 1838, in which she achieved an immediate success, only excelled in the following year, when she captured all Parisian hearts in the ballet which Taglioni had already made famous—*Sylphide*.

Unhappily, in the spring of 1840, her career was interrupted by an accident while rehearsing a *variation* which she was to perform at the benefit of Madame Falcon, the famous singer; and, in consequence of inflammation of the knee, she was laid up for some time in spite of the most careful attention. She never appeared at the Paris Opera again, but in the next few years her recovery was sufficient to allow of her achieving further successes in London, as well as taking part in the *pas de quatre*.

In 1844, Grahn appeared in *Lady Henriette* at Drury Lane, and in the following spring was engaged for the entire season of the Italian Opera at Her Majesty's, where she won the most dazzling of her successes in a ballet entitled *Eoline*, produced in April, 1845.

A contemporary critic records the production in the following amusingly naïve terms: "The Ballet *Eoline*, with its poetic story, was the great hit of the first night spite the difficulties of complicated scenery and mechanical effects. The ballet worked wonders, and Lucile Grahn exhibits nightly the most delightful grace and modesty of deportment, in addition to certainty and *aplomb* of position, reminding one of Canova's masterpieces of sculpture."

Grahn next gave a wonderful performance as Catarina in *La Fille du Bandit*, during May, 1848. According to one critic it "exhibited her talents in a higher degree than anything she has previously appeared in. As the bandit's daughter she assumes a dignified bearing, like that of one born to command, and supports it throughout

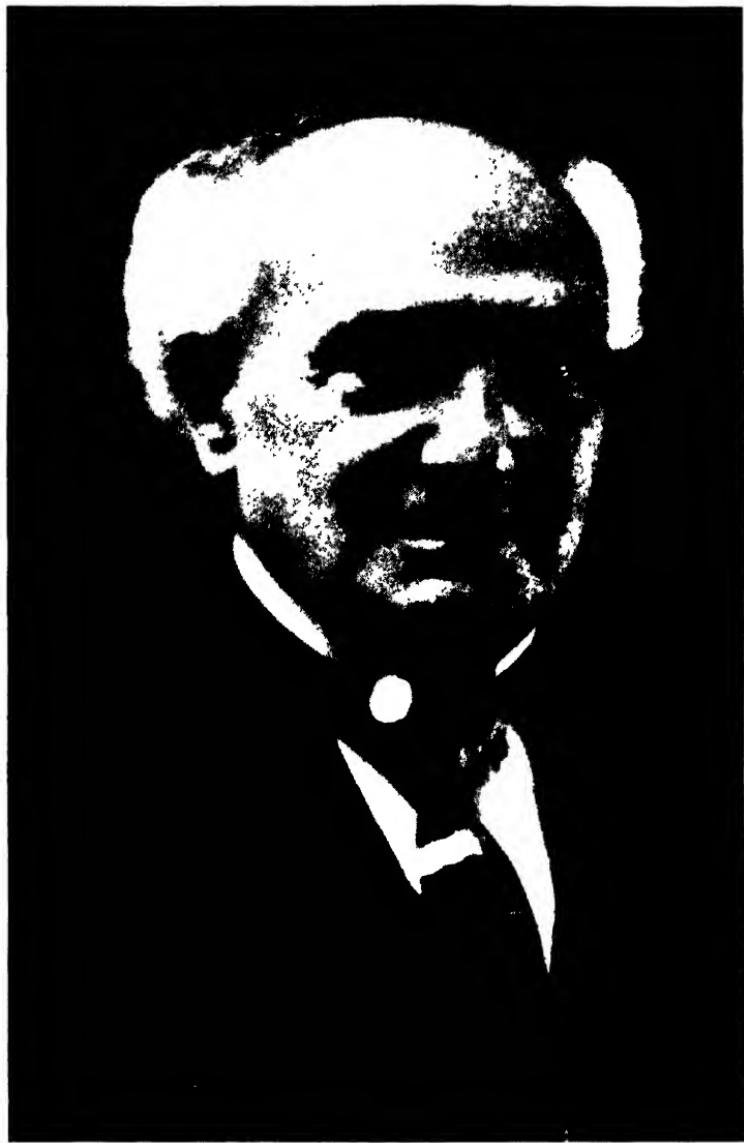
whether in dancing or action . . . and the grace of her solos commands numerous encores."

A yet greater triumph followed in *Le Jugement de Paris*, the honours therein, however, being shared with Cerrito and Taglioni. This appearance was in connection with one of the most striking sensations of the theatrical season of 1848 (certainly the most remarkable in the history of Ballet, save for the famous *pas de quatre* of three years before), namely, the *Pas de Déesses*, to which reference has already been made, and which was performed in the presence of Her Majesty Queen Victoria.

Even the Russians in modern days never evoked greater excitement or enthusiasm than that which greeted the appearance of these three great dancers of the Victorian 'forties in one ballet. Contrasting the production with that of the *pas de quatre*, a contemporary critic remarked that "for poetry of idea and execution, the *Pas des Déesses* has decidedly the advantage," and went on to say : "Besides this, though the attention is principally directed to the three great *danseuses*, yet the grouping is rendered far more effective by the addition of other actors.

"The *pas des déesses* has another recommendation ; it is longer, and the intervals while the three 'stars' are resting themselves, are filled up by the charming butterfly steps of Louise Taglioni, and the most incredible feats on the part of St. Leon and Perrot. In fact, all here surpass themselves—of Taglioni, Grahn, Cerito, each in turn seems to obtain the advantage—though, of course, the palm is finally adjudged by each spectator accordingly as his taste is originally inclined. For ourselves, as critics, obliged to put away all previous predilections, we are compelled to confess that each in her peculiar style, in this *pas*, reaches the *ne plus ultra* of her art, and each is different.

"Though the styles of Taglioni and Lucile Grahn at first sight would seem to be identical, yet they have both their own peculiar characteristics. The buoyant energy of Grahn contrasts with that peculiar quietness that marks Taglioni's most daring feats, while Cerito,



#### ENRICO CECCHETTI

Born 1855, died 1928. *Maitre de dans*, to Imperial Russian Ballet, and at the Scala, Milan. Appeared in London at Empire and other theatres, and was *Maitre* to Pavlova, Nijinsky and Diaghilev's Ballet.



*Photo—Ella*

MME. ANNA PAVLOVA

Born 1882. One of the greatest artists in the history of the Dance, who came to London with her own company in 1910, and subsequently toured the world with increasing success until her death in 1931.

who by her very smallness of stature, seems fitted by nature for another style of dancing, bounds to and fro, as though in the plenitude of enjoyment. We have never seen either of these great *danseuses* achieve such wonders as in this *pas*. The improvement of Lucile Grahn is, above all, marvellous ; she introduces a step entirely new and exquisitely graceful ; and, though it must be of most difficult achievement, she executes it with an ease and lightness which gives her the appearance of flying. It is a species of *valse renversée* on a grand scale. One of the most effective moments with Cerito is that in which she comes on with St. Leon, executing a *jetés battus* in the air, and, at the same moment, turning her head suddenly to catch a sight of the much-desired apple. This never fails to elicit thunders of applause, and an encore.

" As for Taglioni, after taking the most daring leaps in her own easy and exquisitely graceful manner, she flits across the stage with a succession of steps, which, though perfectly simple, are executed with such inconceivable lightness and such enchanting grace, as invariably to call forth one of the most enthusiastic encores we ever remember to have witnessed ; in fact, from beginning to end of the *divertissement*, all the spectators are kept in a state of excitement, which finds vent in clappings, in shoutings, and *bravas*, occasionally quite deafening."

The reference to the styles of Taglioni and Lucile Grahn as being almost " identical " is made additionally interesting by the discerning manner in which the critic contrasts the " buoyant energy of Grahn " with that " peculiar quietness " that marked Taglioni's most daring efforts.

Both had studied in the traditional school, and to that extent were bound to be somewhat similar. Their differences were due to physique and temperament. Grahn, the fair Dane, was somewhat heavier in build, had always been stronger and was also younger than Taglioni, who, weakly in childhood, had always been of more *raffinée* build and temperament, and was now

perhaps a shade less energetic than in the days when she had delighted London with her earliest appearances, some fifteen years before. Still, that "peculiar quietness" had always distinguished her, and was that very quality which had made her so ideal an exponent of *Sylphide*.

Lucile Grahn, who was tall, slim, with blue eyes and blonde hair, was said, as regards her dancing, to possess "less strength than Elssler, less flexibility than Taglioni, but more of both than anyone else." She appeared in London each season until 1848, when the arrival of Jenny Lind created such a craze for Opera—and for Jenny Lind—that Ballet temporarily lost its attraction for London audiences. She lived to see the beginning of this century, and died at Munich in the spring of 1907.

## CHAPTER XXV

### *DECLINE, AND REVIVAL*

AFTER what we call “the Taglioni era” came a period of comparative dullness. Successors there were who charmed their audiences in London, Paris, Rome, Vienna and even in America. There was the brilliant Caroline Rosati ; the stately Amalia Ferraris ; dashing Rita Sangalli—who married a Baron ; dainty Rosita Mauri ; Petitpa, Fabbri, and others whose name and fame were brilliant but transient. But these, you will say, were all foreigners. Had we no English ballet or ballet-dancers ? Well, it may safely be affirmed that Ballet in England was never more thoroughly English, or more thoroughly banal, than for some twenty years before, and after, the Taglioni period.

From 1850 onwards it was the period of the Great Utilities, of which Ballet was not one ! Save for a few good examples later at the old Canterbury Music Hall, with Miss Phyllis Broughton as *première danseuse*, at Weston’s Music Hall, Holborn, and at the Alhambra under Strange’s management, and some good productions at the Crystal Palace arranged by M. Leon Espinosa, it was practically a close time for artistic dance and ballet for something like a quarter of a century.

\* The state of public disfavour into which the art had fallen is well seen from the interesting extract from the *Era Almanack* of 1872, in which one reads : “ Judging from Mr. Mapleson’s extensive productions the Ballet was another sheet anchor on which he relied. Madame Katti Lanner, a Viennese *danseuse* of great repute, was, with other foreign artists, engaged for the express purpose of reviving an interest in the old-fashioned, elaborate ballet of action. The experiment was boldly made, but failed ; and it is clear that all modern audiences care for is an incidental *divertissement* which may mean something or nothing. As for a story worked out by clever pantomime, people refuse to stay and see it, and the deserted appearance of the theatre while

*Giselle* and other ballets were in progress was a significant hint that incidental dances only are appreciated by opera-goers of the present day. The ballets invented by Madame Katti Lanner were *La Rose de Seville*, *Hvika* and one or two nameless *divertissements*. She danced in them all, and in the first act of *Giselle*."

Thus, London audiences from, roughly, 1850 to 1870, had not that burning interest in the art of Ballet which they had displayed for the twenty years or so preceding 1850 ; indeed, they had little or no interest in it. In Paris, conditions were much the same. There were, as we have noted, dancers of some ability and transient fame, but no ballet and no dancer appeared of outstanding merit, such as those of the great periods of the eighteenth century, mid-nineteenth, or such as we have seen to-day. Even dancing, apart from ballet, was but of little interest.

In London, with the 'eighties, came the dear old Gaiety, and another *pas de quatre*, that in *Faust Up-to-Date*, a very different one from that of the 'forties, not the toe-dancing of classic ballet, but step-dancing of the characteristic and admirable English school ; and it was a very bright and inspiring dance, done, with tremendous *verve*, by the Misses Florence Levey, Lillian Price, Maud Wilmot, and Eva Greville. Supreme, however, as an exponent of the purely English school of dancing was unquestionably the late Kate Vaughan, who, with Sylvia Grey, Alice Lethbridge, Letty Lind, and others of their period, the 'eighties, and for well into the 'nineties of last century were the delight of London.

Kate Vaughan herself was one of the most distinguished dancers England has ever had—distinguished for incomparable grace, finish, and a characteristically English refinement of manner. There were no ragged edges to her work. Her art was, as all good art must be, deliberate ; her every pose and movement, beautiful ; and always it was marked by a special and personal charm that never failed her to the end. Shortly before her death I saw her dance at a concert given on behalf of one of the various charities which arose out of the

Boer War ; and all the art and all the charm which had made Kate Vaughan a stage influence in her time, were as amply evident as when she had first delighted us some twenty years before.

With the 'eighties of last century came the rise of the Ballet as a regular London institution, on the founding of those two veteran *vaudeville* houses, the Empire and the Alhambra, where for about a quarter of a century, practically without interruption, Ballet was the chief attraction of their always varied and interesting programmes. In 1884 there had been, of course, the production of Manzotti's famous ballet *Excelsior*, in which the late Signor Enrico Cecchetti was a prominent figure, at Her Majesty's Theatre ; but it was not really until the opening of the old Alhambra and Empire Theatres that we had a real revival Ballet in London apart from the Opera, and without that State-aid which the art has always received on the Continent.



*BOOK IV*  
*THE MODERN ERA*



## CHAPTER XXVI

### BALLET AT THE ALHAMBRA THEATRE, 1854-1894

**I**T has been noted as a fact unique in English theatrical history, that, for over twenty-five years or, roughly, from 1885 to 1915, Ballet was the chief attraction at two London theatres, the Alhambra and the Empire.

Of the two houses the Alhambra was the elder, and had originally been opened, under the impressive title of the "Panopticon of the Arts and Sciences" (with Royal Charter granted by Queen Victoria), as early as 1854. But it soon relinquished its more ambitious purpose of public instruction, and sought, with better success, merely to amuse.

From unorthodox religious services held within its arabesquely decorated walls on the Sundays, it condescended to boxing contests and wrestling matches on the weekdays. Then it was taken over by a well-known theatrical speculator who re-named it "The Alhambra," and, in 1870, secured a regular music-hall licence, music-halls having by now become rather a craze. Still the place was not very successful, and for a while became a circus. Then a Mr. Frederick Strange, who had been connected with the Crystal Palace, became manager, and started to produce ballets, the most notable being one called *L'Enfant Prodigue*, adapted from Auber's opera of that name.

At this period of theatrical history the old-standing quarrel, between the "legitimate" theatres and houses offering less serious entertainment, was again to the fore. At the music-halls, for instance, a ballet might be produced as long as it was called, and was in effect, merely a "divertissement." Anything else, in which words were said or sung, such as an opera, or even a musical sketch, was held to infringe the sacred rights of the "legitimate" theatres; and when John Hollingshead, as stage-director of the Alhambra, produced a pantomime called *Where's the Police?* the management were fined by a magistrate some two hundred and forty pounds.

Apart from such a production as this satiric pantomime there was plenty of the "variety" element in the Alhambra programme ; but, with the dawn of the 'seventies, a new taste for Ballet became evident, and a striking success was achieved in the production of *Les Nations*, of which a lively "Parisian Quadrille" was a particular feature. Then came a season of Promenade Concerts, and during the Franco-Prussian War the conductor, Mr. Jules Rivière, gave the "War Songs of Europe," those of the French and Prussian nations evoking such passion that free fights ensued nightly, and the theatre lost its music-hall licence ; whereupon the directors of the Alhambra Company promptly secured a regular Theatre licence from the Lord Chamberlain ! So, on April 24th, 1871, the house was re-opened as the Alhambra Theatre ; and the evening's entertainment included a farce, a comic opera, then two ballets, an "extravaganza," and yet another ballet, *The Sylph of the Glen*.

In September of the same year a famous family of dancers, the Vokes, made their appearance, the programme including *The Two Gregoys*, a comic ballet ; *The Mountain Sylph* ; and *The Beauties of the Harem*, in which a Mlle Sismondi appeared with much success. A Christmas pantomime followed, with the title *Harlequin Prince Happy-go-Lucky, or Princess Beauty* (a title quite in the good old pantomime style), and included a ballet, with such popular performers as Mlles Pitteri, Sismondi, and another well-known dancing family, the Elliots.

There was a change of management in March, 1872, when John Baum, from Cremorne Gardens, took up the reins and produced Offenbach's charming *Le Roi Carotte*, with M. Jacobi as musical director, and ballets as a feature of the production. Then followed *The Black Crook*, and Offenbach's beautiful opera, *La Belle Hélène* ; and, in December, 1873, *Don Juan*. In the spring of next year came *La Jolie Parfumeuse* ; followed, in the autumn, by a sensational ballet, *The Demon's Bride*, and *Whittington*, an *opera bouffe*, in which the

honours were shared by two very popular stars of that day, Kate Santley and Julia Mathews.

In the autumn of 1875, with Mr. Joseph A. Cave as manager and producer, came *Spectresheim*, and a comic ballet, *Cupid in Arcadia*, in which the noted Lauri family and the Majiltons appeared ; a succession of farces, pantomimes, extravaganzas, light-opera and ballets following on, among the most noteworthy production being Strauss's *Die Fledermaus*, produced at the Alhambra on January 9th, 1877.

In September of the same year was staged Offenbach's *opéra bouffe*, *Orphée aux Enfers*, with handsome, golden-haired Mlle Cornélie d'Anka as the chief attraction ; the same programme including the ballet of *Yolande*, invented and designed by Alfred Thompson, with music by Mons. G. Jacobi, and dances by Mons. A. Bertrand from the Paris Opera, who was later to become much associated with Alhambra productions.

It has been stated that "towards the end of 1877," the late Mr. Charles Morton, one of the ablest theatrical managers London has known, took charge of the Alhambra ; and that he started his connection therewith by reviving one of his former great successes, namely, *La Fille de Madame Angot*. But the first time his name appeared on the programme as manager was early in January, 1878 ; and not with *Madame Angot* as his first production, but with *Wildfire*, a "Grand, Spectacular, Fairy, Musical and Pantomimic Extravaganza" (as it was described) by the then very popular *collaborateurs*, H. B. Farnie and R. Reece—an extra extravagant "extravaganza" in three acts, and fourteen tableaux !

Next month came a triple bill, starting at 7.20 with a farce, *Crowded Houses* ; then, at 8, *La Fille de Madame Angot*, with Mlles Cornélie d'Anka, Selina Dolaro and Lennox Grey as the bright particular stars ; followed at 10.30, with *Les Gardes Françaises*, a grand military ballet, and with Mlles E. Pertoldi and Th. Gillert as the leading artists, the dances being arranged by Mons. A. Bertrand, the whole production proving very successful.

Much of its success—as in the case of the two or three

preceding spectacles—was attributable largely to the splendour of the staging and the costumes ; *apropos* to which it should be noted here that it was first in 1877 that the well-known costumiers, Alias, began to be associated with the Alhambra. It was not, however, until 1884, when the magistrate's licence for music and dancing was again recovered, that the late M. Alias (to whom, as also to the late Mr. Alfred Moul, I have been indebted for several details of the theatre's earlier history) regularly took up the position of Costumier to the Alhambra, in which capacity he had entire control of the costume department, a very important factor in spectacular production, and he supplied every dress worn on the stage for a period of about thirty years.

The next production, in April, 1878, was another Offenbach revival, namely, *The Grand Duchess*, with Mlles Pertoldi and T. de Gillert in the cast, M. Bertrand (by now engaged as resident ballet-master) introducing two ballets, one Hungarian and the other Bohemian. In the June came the production of Von Suppé's comic opera *Fatinitza*, preceded by a farce, *Which is Which*, and followed by a "grand Indian" *ballet d'action* by the late J. Albery, entitled *The Golden Wreath*, arranged by Bertrand, with music by Jacobi. This was a gorgeous production, and so successful that, when Offenbach's *Genèvieve de Brabant* was staged in the autumn, this ballet was still running.

The sensation of the following spring was the Parisian production of *La Poule aux Œufs d'Or*, a "new grand Spectacular and Musical féerie," by MM. Denhery and Clairville, adapted to the English stage by Frank Hall, with a very strong cast including such well-known favourites as Constance Loseby, Emily Soldene, the celebrated French duettists Bruet and Rivière, and with Pertoldi and Gillert as leading *danseuses*.

In the Autumn came a revival of Offenbach's *The Princess of Trebizonde*, the opera being followed by *Le Carnaval de Venise*, a ballet in which that fine, statuesque dancer and expressive mime, the late Mme Malvina Cavallazi—later to become so great a favourite with the

Empire's audiences—was supported by Mlle de Gillert and other Alhambra favourites. This production was succeeded by Lecocq's comic opera, *La Petite Mademoiselle*, of which the English libretto was by Reece and Henry S. Leigh, a very brilliant cast including the late Fred Leslie, Harry Paulton and Constance Loseby. The opera was preceded by a farce, and followed by a ballet, *Carmen*, of which the dances were by Bertrand and music by Jacobi. Then, on December 22nd, 1879, came the production of *Rothomago*, a "Christmas Fairy Spectacle," arranged by H. B. Farnie from the French, in four acts and seventeen tableaux!

The spring of 1880 was marked by the successful production of Offenbach's *La Fille du Tambour Major*, with an excellent cast including the fascinating Fanny Leslie who, later, became so popular a variety artiste; and it was followed by a gorgeous Egyptian ballet, *Memnon*, in which Mlle Pertoldi and Mlles Rosa and Marie Muller (the two latter being pupils of Mme Katti Lanner) were the chief attractions, not to omit "*Aenea*," known as the "Flying Wonder." In 1881, Mr. Charles Morton left the Alhambra, and a striking success was achieved by the new manager, Mr. William Holland, with *Babil and Bijou*, in the two grand ballets of which (for which the dresses were designed by the late Mr. C. Wilhelm) were to be seen Mlle Pertoldi, and Mlle Palladino, a *petite* and fascinating dancer who, later, was to become one of the leading favourites at the Empire.

The theatre was burnt down in December, 1882, and on rebuilding, various successful productions were staged. The house, however, did not really enter upon its most triumphant phase until October, 1884, when it became the Alhambra Theatre of Varieties, with Ballet now as its chief and permanent attraction.

The first of the productions was *A Village Festival*, a new "grand ballet of Old Times," with Mlle Palladino as the *première danseuse*. It was followed in the December with another and very successful ballet, *The Swans*, with Mlle Palladino as leading dancer. On the Christmas

Eve yet another was staged, *Melusine*, a new fantastic ballet, in which a Mlle Sampietro was the chief attraction. *Le Bivouac*—a military spectacle ; *The Seasons*, *Algeria*, *Dresdina*, *Ideala*, a “pastoral divertissement” ; *Irene*, a poetic ballet ; and *Our Army and Navy*, a patriotic spectacle ; were all progressively successful productions.

*Asmodeus* and *Zanetta* followed, bringing us to June, 1890, and these, too, were notable for gorgeous stage effects and for the dancing of the more recent favourites, Mlle Cormani, Signorina Legnani, Mme Roffey and Signor de Vicenti, the last named being for many years associated with the Alhambra productions. *Salandra*, given for the first time on June 23rd, 1890, was another remarkably fine production : and, with the late Charles Morton as Acting Manager, Vernon Dowsett as Stage Manager, Mr. T. E. Ryan for Scenic Artist, Signor Casati as *maitre de ballet*, and a superb orchestra of fifty instrumentalists under Mons. C. Jacobi, the Alhambra's new era of growing prosperity was now assured.

The ballet was in five tableaux, and involved some striking changes of scene. The heroine, “*Salandra*” (Signorina Legnani), was a Gipsy Queen, and the opening scene introduced various Tzigane dances. There was an exciting wrestling match and a lively hunting dance in the third tableau ; a charming fair-scene in the last ; and the whole production fully displayed that characteristic brightness, efficiency of performance and splendour of stage effect, which long marked the Alhambra as a theatre of deservedly increasing popularity.

At Christmas in that year, *The Sleeping Beauty* was a great attraction, and was followed, in 1891, by *On the Roofs*, a “ballet-pantomime” by the famous Lauri troupe. *Oriella*, a new fantastic ballet—described as “the most beautiful of all,” then produced at the Alhambra—followed ; then another musical “pantomime” by Charles Lauri, *The Sculptor and the Poodle* : then a comic ballet, *The Sioux*, by Charles Lauri and his troupe, with music by Mr. Walter Slaughter ; and, in



MME. ADELINE GENÉE AS "SWANIE DA" IN COPPELIA  
Famous for her long association with the Empire Theatre, and President of the  
Operatic Association



Photo - T. O. Hoff

MME. TAMARA KARSAVINA

A brilliant member of the Diaghileff Ballet, and authoress of *Theatre Street*.

September, 1892, *Up the River*, a very popular production invented by the late John Hollingshead, in which Ryan's riverside scenery was particularly admired, the scenic effects—including a remarkable storm—being admirably managed ; the ballet well performed ; and M. Jacobi's flowing and richly orchestrated music better than ever.

*Temptation*, a “new, grand fantastic ballet, in three tableaux,” invented and arranged by Signor Carlo Coppi, was another very successful production ; and that of *Aladdin*, by John Hollingshead on December 19th, 1892, called forth further tributes of praise for the enterprising Manager. The familiar story was closely followed, the situations were striking, and the four changes of scene were effected without once lowering the curtain, while the last, “The Veil of Diamonds,” was amazing. A tableau-curtain of glass was introduced, composed of some 75,000 glass facets, held together by twenty-four miles of wire, and illuminated by various electric and other lights of different colours, the whole achieving one of the most wonderful effects “ever seen on any stage.”

Another great success was *Chicago*, in March, 1893, a lively production, which later ran into a “second edition,” as did also a romantic ballet, *Fidelia*, adapted from *Le Violon du Diable*. The Alhambra by now had come under the management of Mr. Albert A. Gilmer, with Mr. A. G. Ford as Stage Manager, and Signor Casati as *maître de ballet*, Mons. G. Jacobi, as conductor and composer of the music, still continuing in their accustomed spheres.

Yet another triumph under the same able direction was *Don Quixote*, with Mr. Fred Storey as a brilliant exponent of the title rôle, and Signorina Porro as the Dulcinea. The ballet proved enormously popular, and a typical comment by a leading critic was as follows : “Within the charming framework of the four admirably painted scenes by Ryan there is a continuous procession of ballet incident, the costumes quaint, picturesque, poetic, splendid, and nevertheless suggestive always of

old Spain. . . . The stage organisation of the Alhambra is always good. Nowhere do we see better mass dancing ; and nowhere either do the dancers receive more assistance from the musician. M. Jacobi's ballet music is as sympathetic as its tunefulness is inexhaustible. This is M. Jacobi's eighty-ninth ballet here."

That last remark may come as a revelation to those who do not realise how much of home-produced, yet brilliantly successful ballet was to be seen at two London theatres in the course of some thirty years. *Don Quixote* was M. Jacobi's " eighty-ninth ballet " at the Alhambra, and—there were other Jacobian productions to follow !

## CHAPTER XXVII

### BALLET AT THE ALHAMBRA THEATRE, 1894-1914

WHEN Mr. Alfred Moul became Manager of the Alhambra in 1894, the results of his long association with the dramatic and lyric stage soon became apparent in the series of brilliant successes in the production of Ballet at the famous house of which he had now assumed control. A marked success of 1894 was *Sita*, the story of which dealt with an Indian girl's hopeless love for the accepted lover of her master's daughter ; and a grand spectacular ballet, on the familiar theme of *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves*, was the sensation of the close of the year, more particularly owing to the introduction of an "aerial ballet" by the Grigolati troupe, the ballet being gorgeously staged, and introducing an especially attractive dancer, Signorina Cecilia Cerri. *Bluebeard*, in 1895, was another popular success on familiar lines ; and *Rip Van Winkle*, with Mr. Fred Storey, masterly as "Rip," was yet another, towards the end of 1896.

In the Jubilee Year of 1897 was staged *Victoria and Merrie England*, a "grand national ballet in eight tableaux," by Signor Carlo Coppi, the music by Sir Arthur Sullivan, with M. Jacobi as conductor, and a strong cast, including Signorina Legnani, Miss Ethel Hawthorne, and those very popular dancers, Miss Julia Seale and Miss Josephine Casaboni. The ballet was a huge success, was certainly one of the finest "patriotic" productions ever seen on the London stage, and the performances were honoured with nearly a score of Royal visits.

A popular triumph of the spring of 1898 was a grand ballet on the old theme of *Beauty and the Beast*, invented and produced by Carlo Coppi, with music by Jacobi. The sensation of the production was the second tableau, "The Garden of Roses," in which Signorina Cerri, supported by the *corps de ballet*, appeared in a grand valse representing every known kind of rose, each dancer being almost hidden by the flowers—red, tea, moss-roses, and every other type—a luxurious mass of living

blooms, weaving itself into ever fresh and endless harmonies of colour and enchantment ; and yet another great effect was attained in a similarly gorgeous butterfly ballet.

On the retirement of Mr. Moul in 1898, Mr. C. Dundas Slater became General Manager of the Alhambra, with Mr. James Howell as Business Manager, Mr. Charles Wilson as Stage Manager, Mr. H. Woodford as Secretary and Treasurer ; and Mr. G. W. Byng as Musical Director—the last two named gentlemen holding their appointments for many years subsequently.

A very popular production of this year was *Jack Ashore*, described as “an unpretentious Sketchy *Divertissement* in One Tableau,” invented and produced by Charles Wilson, with dances arranged by Signor Pratesi, and music by Mr. George Byng. It had a delightful early nineteenth-century setting for its dramatic little story, and was capitally played by a cast including Miss Julia Seale, Miss Casaboni, the Misses Grace and Sybil Arundale, Mr. Albert Le Fre and the Brothers Almonti.

An attractive production of the following year was *A Day Off*, which, however, was somewhat outshone by the beauty of *The Red Shoes*, a fine spectacular ballet based on Hans Andersen’s famous story, with a good cast including Mlle Emilienne D’Alençon, Miss Julia Seale and Miss J. Casaboni—a very vivacious and attractive dancer.

Two noteworthy ballets of 1900 were *Napoli*, in one scene, written by Signor Giovanni Pratesi, produced by Charles Wilson, with music by George Byng ; and a patriotic military display, *Soldiers of the Queen*, produced by Charles Wilson, under the direction of Mr. Dundas Slater, the scene representing Queen’s Parade, Aldershot, from sunrise to sunset, concluding with an Inspection and Grand March by the combined bands of Infantry, Drums and Fifes, *corps de ballet*, chorus and auxiliaries, numbering over two hundred and fifty, and representing some thirty leading regiments. Needless to say, produced as it was when patriotic feeling was at

its height on account of the Boer War, it was as popular as it was brilliant.

A romantic nautical ballet, in three scenes, entitled *The Handy Man*, followed in January, 1901, written and produced by Charles Wilson, with music by George Byng, and dances arranged by Signor Rossi. In the same programme was a vocal *ballet divertissement*, *The Gay City*, by the same author and musician, the dances arranged by Mme Cormani. Later this was retained, and was followed by a grand ballet, entitled *Inspiration*, invented and written by Mr. Malcolm Watson, the music being by Byng, the dances by Coppi, the cast including Miss Judith Espinosa, as the "Genius of Inspiration," Miss Edith Slack, as a Greek Dancer, and Fred Farren, as "Caliban." The year closed with a very charming *divertissement*, *Gretna Green*, and a revised edition of *Soldiers of the King*.

*In Japan*, a fascinating ballet, adapted by the well-known author, Mr. S. L. Bensusan, from his story, *Dédé*, with music specially composed by M. Louis Ganne, proved particularly attractive. There was a capital story, the acting and dancing were unusually good, and the mounting and stage-effects, under the direction of Mr. Dundas Slater and Charles Wilson, were fresh and beautiful, especially the "Ballet of Blossoms."

The theatre at this period was once again to come under the influence of Mr. Alfred Moul. At an Annual General Meeting of the shareholders at the commencement of the year 1902, Mr. Moul was invited, by both shareholders and directors, to assume control, and within a few weeks was installed as Chairman of the Company, again throwing all his energies into a congenial task. One of his first achievements was to secure the services of an old collaborator, and, to-day, eminent musician, Mr. (now Sir) Landon Ronald.

From the pen of that accomplished composer came the music for a spectacular Patriotic Ballet entitled *Britannia's Realm*, in a prologue and four scenes, invented and produced by Charles Wilson, with dances by Carlo Coppi. It was one of the best planned, and most

extraordinarily sumptuous, productions ever seen at the Alhambra, long famous for the splendour of its effects ; and, while there were several charming novelties, such as the *Pas des Patineurs*, in Canadian Skating Carnival scene (the music of which must still haunt those who heard it), probably nothing finer has ever been produced on the Alhambra stage for sheer magnificence than the Indian jewel scene, and the grand *finale* representing “ Homage to Britannia,” and the formation of the Union Jack. It was an astonishing and impressive production, and well deserved the enthusiasm with which, night after night for some months, the ballet was received.

An excellent ballet of 1903 was *The Devil's Forge*, invented by Charles Wilson and Mme Cormani, with music by Mr. George Byng. This also ran for some months, and was a charming and dramatic work, beautifully staged and uncommonly well acted, particularly good work being done by Miss Edie Slack as the hero, Karl, and Miss Marjorie Skelley as the Fairy of the Mountain.

Before this was withdrawn a very clever adaptation of *Carmen* had been staged, with much of Bizet's music, ingeniously handled by George Byng, who had composed some admirable extra numbers. It was finely produced, notable for the strength of the cast and vitality of the entire *corps de ballet*, and above all for the superb acting of Señora Guerrero as Carmen, and of a M. Volbert as Don José.

Apart from Guerrero's fine presence, her magnificent dancing, the breadth, realism and intensity of her acting throughout, all of which one could never forget, there were two particularly memorable moments of that production ; one was the fortune-telling scene, the other—the scene in which Carmen, flirting with the Lieutenant of Gendarmes in order to lure him away from the gipsy camp, is dividing her attention between her flirtation and the knowledge that Don José has only just been frustrated from stabbing her, while so engaged, by the sudden intervention of her comrades, who are

endeavouring to drag him away silently so that the Lieutenant who is just in front shall not hear and so discover the presence of the gipsy band.

In the card scene, Guerrero gave in all its fullness the sense of a tragic, overhanging doom. In the other, all the combined cunning and fighting instinct of a savage animal at bay with circumstance, and trying by sheer cunning and audacity to master it, came out, and it was not acting but reality, the real Carmen of Merimée extricating herself and her comrades from discovery and disaster by superb daring in the use of her dazzling, unconscionable charm.

There were novelty and charm in *All the Year Round*, a ballet in seven scenes, written and produced by Charles Wilson, with music by James W. Glover, on January 21st, 1904. It was one that should always be worth revival, with topical modifications, and, though a genuine ballet, with a central idea connecting its varied scenes, it seemed in form somewhat to herald the *revue* which has since become such a craze; and was what one might call a ballet in free form.

The main theme was the whim of a young French marquis, who, having invited friends to a dinner-party and engaged a Hungarian band for their entertainment, himself turns up late to find that his *chef* is about to resign because the dinner is spoilt, and the servants are on the verge of striking, while the guests are dancing. Annoyed at a clock which reminds him of his unpunctuality, he orders its destruction. The band now "strikes" and as everything is topsy-turvy, the young host—not too blasé to enjoy any new freak—suggests that servants and guests shall change places. This done, they welcome in the New Year, and on the departure of the last guest, the butler brings his master a large Calendar which the young man is mockingly about to destroy also, when the Spirit of Happiness descends from it, and, as he pursues her, she bids him learn how he may obtain Happiness throughout the dawning year—thus paving the way for a sort of *revue* of the Months.

The scheme gave scope for novel effects, and topical reference to festivals such as St. Valentine's Day, St. Patrick's Day ; various sports and pastimes ; a river scene, a seaside bathing scene, an August Bank Holiday Revel. But the greatest charm of the production was in scenes where a more poetic fancy had had free play, as in that representing the approach of Spring, a glory of white and pink may, lilac and laburnum, and heralding the blossoms of early summer, the scene closing with a ballet of swallows and of May flowers.

The Autumnal scene, with its ballet of wheat, corn-flowers, poppies and autumn leaves, was a charming incident and in the warmth of its colouring provided an excellent contrast to the earlier scene. The November scene was, rightly enough, placed in London, on the Thames Embankment by Cleopatra's Needle, amid a typical London fog ; while that of December closed with a grand Christmas ballet of holly, mistletoe and icicles, with snow-clad tree and hedgerow in the background.

It was indeed a capital production and ran for months, indeed was still in the programme when a new and topical ballet, *The Entente Cordiale*, was staged in August, 1904. This also was invented and produced by Charles Wilson, with excellent music by Sir Landon Ronald, and dances arranged and composed by Signor Alfredo Curti, who for the next few years was to be closely associated with the Alhambra as *maître de ballet*.

The opening scene represented the "Grove of Concordia," where the five Great Powers of Europe assemble to pay homage to the Goddess of Progress. But, later, the Demon of War enters upon the world stage and stirs up strife among the Nations, and all the horrors of War are felt throughout the world, until finally Peace prevails and summons the Ambassadors to enter, and the Nations to assemble, in the Temple of Peace, where the Representatives of all the Nations, assisted by the Orders of the Legion of Honour of France and the Garter of England, at last form a grand alliance of all

the Powers and ensure the peace of the world in one *Grande Entente Cordiale*, a scene of splendour strangely denied by subsequent history but, let us hope, yet prophetic of the future.

*Parisiana*, a grand ballet in six scenes by Charles Wilson, with music by Glover, and dances arranged by Signor Curti, and some gorgeous costumes by Alias, from designs by Comelli, gave us fascinating glimpses of Paris at various periods—1790, 1830, 1906. Among noteworthy members of the cast was Mlle Jane May, heroine of that famous production in 1890 of *L'Enfant Prodigue*, since revived in recent years, even more beautifully, by Miss Irene Mawer.

Between October, 1906, and May 14th, 1907, the Alhambra underwent partial reconstruction, with complete and elaborate redecoration, and, big as the task was, it was carried through with entire success, and without closing the theatre for a single night ! Mr. Alfred Moul had now assumed the dual task of Chairman and Managing Director, and the Alhambra entered upon a yet more brilliant phase of artistic success in 1907, when *The Queen of Spades*, a dramatic ballet, of which the action and dances were by Signor Curti, was staged ; and it proved so successful as to run into a second “edition” and continue in the programme for months.

Signor Alfredo Curti came from the Scala, Milan, where he had studied the art of Ballet-composition on traditional lines laid down by the virtual founder of the Milan school, Carlo Blasis, of whom, as of Noverre, he was a great admirer, and about whom I enjoyed many an interesting conversation. Signor Curti, whose knowledge of the history of the Dance was encyclopædic, was an ardent follower of the traditional school ; and, as an accomplished dancer and mime, an artist, a trained geometrician, and devotee of literature and music, he brought to bear on his work as composer of Ballet, a theatrical experience and wide artistic culture akin to that of Blasis himself. While the action of his ballets was always clear-cut, coherent and dramatic,

his appreciation of stage-effect and his handling of massed groups of dancers in motion were masterly.

In the production of *Queen of Spades*, the story of which dealt with the allure of gambling, he was supported on the musical side by that distinguished Italian composer, the late Signor Mario Costa, additional numbers being contributed by Mr. George W. Byng. With Signorina Maria Bordin, a distinguished dancer of the typical Italian school, as *prima ballerina assoluta*, seconded by that admirable mime, Miss Julia Seale, by Signor Santini, and an excellent *corps de ballet*, the production achieved enormous success, and appreciative audiences found special reason for approval in the novelty of the stage effects, such as the "Dream Visions" in the third scene, with its "Valse des Liqueurs," the "Grand March of Playing Cards," the novel "Bridge" minuet; the "Conflict between Evil and Good," not to mention the dramatic effect of the "Temptation" scene which followed, and the gorgeous *finale* in the "Nymphs' Grotto of La Source."

Successful as this production was, it was eclipsed in October, 1907, by one even more striking, namely, *Les Cloches de Corneville*, the world-famous *opera comique*. The *ballet d'action* was invented by Signor Curti, set to the original music, as ingeniously selected, arranged and supplemented by George W. Byng, and the entire spectacle was produced under the personal direction of Mr. Alfred Moul. Signor G. Rosi gave an extremely dramatic study of the miserly Gaspard, with Signor Santini as a dashing Marquis de Corneville, Miss Daisy Taylor an attractive Germaine, Miss Julia Seale playing cleverly as Grenicheux, while that spirited and graceful Italian dancer, Signorina Maria Bordin, won fresh laurels as the Spirit of the Bells.

The production was beautifully staged. No prettier scene was ever set on the Alhambra stage than that of the Hiring Fair and Apple Harvest, with its dance of apple-gatherers, and the *sabot* dance; nor one more gorgeous than the last, in the Baronial Hall of the Château Corneville, with its striking Grand March of

Knights. The ballet ran continuously *for over seven months*, and was revived with no less success two years later.

Once more a "topical" ballet held the place of honour in the programme on May 25th, 1908. *The Two Flags*, a Franco-British *divertissement*, arranged and produced by Signor Curti, with some capital music by George Byng, was presented under the personal direction of Mr. Alfred Moul, the chief rôle of *La Gaiété de Paris* being taken by Mlle Pomponette—the very personification of *enfantine* gaiety—well supported by Miss Julia Seale, Signor Rossi and other Alhambra favourites.

In the same programme was given, under the title of "Sal ! Oh, My !" a satire on what we may term the "Salome" School of dancing, just then rather a craze. The Alhambra skit, described as "a musical etcetera," served to introduce to a London audience for the first time *La Belle Leonora*, a very handsome *danseuse*, who was, for several seasons, to become the bright, particular star of the Alhambra.

These two productions continued in the bill for some months, but gave place in October, 1908, to *Paquita*, a romantic ballet arranged and produced by Curti, with music by Byng, and the production introduced to London audiences for the first time Mlle Britta, a charming young Danish dancer with an interesting personality and marked dramatic talent.

In the same programme was included *On the Square*, a *divertissement* arranged and produced by Miss Elise Clerc, the scene of which was laid in Herald Square, New York, and formed a background for dances by newsboys, flower-girls, equestriennes, cake-walks, "apache" dances, a dance of "Fluffy Ruffles and Rough Riders," a clever eccentric *pas de deux*, by Miss Clerc herself and Mr. Frank Lawton, senior (the whistler, who first came into prominence in London in the original production of *The Belle of New York*), one of the most attractive items in the whole production being a marionette *pas de deux* by Mlle Britta and Miss Carlotta Mossetti, a clever dancer and expressive mime.

The *divertissement* held its place in the programme for a considerable time, but was in general character hardly up to the artistic tone of the Alhambra's past ; and the production of *Psyche*, a classic idyll in three scenes, of which the dramatic action and dances were by Signor Curti, and the music was by Mr. Alfred Moul, came as a welcome relief to the banalities of ragtime, the more so in providing an opportunity for another striking success by Mlle Leonora, whose statuesque grace was well suited by the classic beauty of the setting provided for her.

*Femina*, another fine production by Signor Curti, gave Mlle Leonora opportunities of which she fully availed herself, more especially in her own national dance ; and Mlle Britta achieved a marked success both as dancer and actress.

Then followed an influx of Russian dancers to the Alhambra, in *The Dance Dream*, invented and produced by Alexander A. Gorsky, and notable for superb mounting and the classic dancing of Mme Catrina Geltzer and M. Tichomiroff. It was followed by the exquisite ballet, simply entitled "1830" ; and then came a superb production, a new version of *Carmen*, produced by Mr. Dion Clayton Calthrop, and with some especially fine dancing by "La Malaguenita" and other Spanish artists.

We must, however, leave any further consideration of the many notable examples of Ballet at the Alhambra, which was subsequently given up to *Revue* for a time, until a return to imported Ballet, namely, the *Ballets Russes de Monte Carlo*, to which reference will be made in due course ; and we must now turn to the history of the Empire, where a long series of always artistic productions provided those who witnessed them with many interesting and happy memories.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### *BALLET AT THE EMPIRE THEATRE, 1884-1902*

LIKE the Alhambra, the Empire, before becoming a regular theatre, with the late H. J. Hitchins as Manager, on April 17th, 1884, had also “played many parts.” The site had once been occupied by a Royal residence, which became in turn a picture, or exhibition gallery, and a *café chantant*, before being burnt down in 1865.

Then the well-known manager of the old Gaiety Theatre, John Hollingshead, proposed erecting a theatre on the site, but the scheme fell through and the ruin remained ruinous for some years, until it housed, for a time, a panorama of “Balaclava.” Then a theatre was started, to be called the “Pandora,” but did not get finished under that ill-omened title. Finally it opened in 1884, as “The Empire,” with *Chilperic*, a musical spectacle in three acts and seven tableaux, founded on the opera adapted by H. Hersee and H. B. Farnie, with music by Hervé, the production including three grand ballets, invented and arranged by Bertrand.

The sensation of the third act was—a “midnight review and electric ballet of fifty Amazons, as invented by Trouvé, of Paris (being the first time where three electric lamps are carried and manipulated by one person, with the most startling and gorgeous effect).” The dancers included Mlle Sismondi, Mlle Aguzzi and Fräulein Höfschüller; and the costumes by Alias were after designs by Bianchini, Faustin and by “Wilhelm,” the last-named being intimately associated with the many brilliant productions at the Empire from its opening in 1884.

It does not seem to be commonly known that while still counted as a “theatre,” the Empire was already foreshadowing its destiny as a home of English Ballet, in the production of a version of *Coppélia*, *not* that of Délibes, but one founded on Hoffman’s famous story, with music by Léon; Délibes’ *Sylvia* also being produced at about the same period. Probably few people

of to-day are aware that the famous ballet *Giselle* was also given in those early days at the Empire, in December, 1884.

On December 21st, 1885, was produced *Hurly Burly*, a "military pantomime ballet"; on June 12th, 1886, came *The Palace of Pearl*, in which there were a Moorish ballet, with a Mlle Luna as *première*, and a "lace" ballet, in which Mlle Pertoldi was the bright particular star.

The Empire was afterwards occupied for a time by the Gaiety Company in burlesque (while a French company was at the Gaiety); and, later, by a musical extravaganza, *The Lady of the Locket*, in which Miss Florence St. John played the lead, and Mr. Hayden Coffin made, I believe, his first appearance, as "Cosmo."

Its career as a regular theatre not being as successful as had been hoped, a fresh licence was obtained, and on December 22nd, 1887, under the joint direction of the late Mr. George Edwardes and Sir Augustus Harris—with Mr. H. J. Hitchins as Manager—it started afresh as "The Empire Theatre of Varieties," with Ballet as its chief attraction; and at once assumed an important place as one of the leading variety houses of the world.

At the beginning of the Empire's prosperous career a wise choice was made in the selection of the late Madame Katti Lanner as *maîtresse de ballet*. She was a daughter of the famous Viennese waltz composer, Joseph Lanner—who, when he died, was followed to the grave by some ten thousand people. She was herself a keen lover of music, and one of my pleasantest memories is of a dinner-party she gave in celebration of her 90th birthday, when she sat down at the piano and played to us one of her father's waltzes. In her earlier days, Mme Katti Lanner had been a famous *danseuse*, who had appeared as a child at the Vienna Opera House with Fanny Ellsler, and later made her world-tour, as great dancers did then, and do to-day.

In the first of many pleasant interviews I had with her in her retirement, she told me how, as a young girl, she had danced with Cerito, and with Fanny Ellsler, and

how the latter had prophesied for her a successful career ; and she spoke with deep enthusiasm of the personal fascination, the brilliant art and noble presence of the great dancer who was known to London of the 'forties as the " divine " Fanny.

In the course of time Mme Lanner came to settle in London, and had produced ballets at Her Majesty's (where she had also appeared) and at Drury Lane before her invaluable services were secured by the far-seeing management of the Empire in 1887.

She had already, some ten years before, established her National School of Dancing ; and with this to draw upon, it was only natural that, from the first, her productions at the Empire should be marked by a uniformly high standard of technique. At no theatre or opera house can a high standard be maintained unless it can draw upon some such school, either on the premises or off, where young talent is fostered and developed, where consistent practice is kept up under critical eyes, and where a uniform degree of technical efficiency and a high sense of style are cultivated. So it has been with Milan and Paris, Vienna and elsewhere ; and so it became when Mme Lanner began her association with that series of productions at the Empire, of which it may be truthfully said that each achieved both artistic and financial success.

The programme on the opening night, Thursday, December 22nd, 1887, included two ballets, *Sports of England*, and *Dilara*. The former—the costumes for which were designed by Mr. Percy Anderson—was, as its title betokens, a representation of the various British sports and pastimes ; and was naturally very popular with the *habitués* of the Empire. The second—the costumes of which were designed by the late Mr. C. Wilhelm—was a brilliant spectacle, of Eastern character ; and both ballets, arranged by Mme Lanner, with music by Hervé, ran for months.

They were succeeded by *Rose d'Amour* in May, 1888, one of Mme Katti Lanner's greatest triumphs. It was notable, too, for the appearance of such dancers as Mlle

Adéle Rossi from the Paris Opera ; Mlle Santori and Mlle Bettina de Sortis ; *Ænea*, the flying dancer ; and also the late Enrico Cecchetti. *Rose d'Amour* dealt with the loves and quarrels of flowerland. It was a long and elaborate production, with a prodigal display of lovely costumes designed by Mr. Wilhelm ; and it rather opened the eyes of Londoners as to the possibilities of the art of Ballet.

*Diana*, a graceful idyll on classic lines—the scenario of which was suggested by Mr. Wilhelm, and arranged by Mme Lanner—followed, on October 31st of the same year, with that graceful dancer, Mme Palladino, and Signor Albertieri in the cast ; and, later, Mme Malvina Cavallazzi, who appeared for the first and last time in ballet-skirts at the Empire, her subsequent appearances being usually in male character, of which she was a dignified and statuesque exponent.

Early next year came the first London production of Paul Martinetti and Hervé's famous *mime*, *A Duel in the Snow*, a dramatic play finely staged and acted. In the spring of 1889 was produced another superb ballet, *Cleopatra* (inspired by Sir Rider Haggard's novel, then appearing in serial form in the pages of the *Illustrated London News*), which ran for four months.

In the autumn it gave place to a popular production dealing with the diversions, and bearing the title of *The Paris Exhibition* : and in December of the same year, on the eve of Christmas Eve, came a spectacular ballet, *The Dream of Wealth*, by Mme Katti Lanner, with music by that fine composer so long afterwards associated with the Empire, Mons. L. Wenzel, and with costumes and accessories designed by Mr. Wilhelm. The cast included Mme Malvina Cavallazzi, as a miser ; Signor Luigi Albertieri, as the Demon of Avarice ; the exquisite little Bettina de Sortis, as *première*, representing “The Key of the Jewel Casket.”

The same admirable trio were included in the new ballet, *Cécile* (by Lanner, Wenzel and Wilhelm, again), which followed on May 20th, 1890, the *première danseuse* being Mlle Giuri, a dancer of pure technique and singu-



MISS PHYLLIS BEDELLS

With John Byron in Debussy's *Clair de Lune*, danced before Her Majesty the Queen at a Charity Performance on November 3rd, 1933, at the London Hippodrome.



MME. MARIE RAMBERT  
Director of the successive Rambert Ballet

larly *élégante* style as well as a most admirable "mime." The period of the *divertissement* was Louis-Seize, and the production was very charmingly staged, one of the chief points being a wonderful colour-scheme of almost one tone, composed of white and silver and mother-of-pearl. This was in the second tableau, depicting a court in the palace of a rajah who had abducted a pupil from a French school ! In this ballet that delightful English dancer, Miss Topsy Sinden, first made her London *début* as a tiny child, with her brother, Bert Sinden.

The spring of next year was marked by the production of the classic *Orfeo*, the scenario of which was by Wilhelm. Mme Cavallazzi was a superb exponent of the title-*rôle*, Miss Ada Vincent was excellent as Eurydice, and sound support was given by Mlle Adéle Rossi and Enrico Cecchetti.

The autumn of the same year saw the advent of *By the Sea*, perhaps the earliest of the "up-to-date" ballets ; and, on December 22nd, that of *Nisita*, the latter a romantic ballet with an Albanian setting, a very pretty second tableau showing a "Revel of the Fairies," and with Mlle Emma Palladino as the handsome heroine, Nita, and Mme Cavallazzi as the hero, Delvinos. The first night this was produced, December 22nd, 1891, by the way, there was one of the very worst fogs London has ever seen, so thick that you could not see the drop-curtain from the third row of the stalls ! But the innate brightness of the production overcame its gloomy environment at birth, and it ran for months.

In May, 1892, came *Versailles*, another superb ballet, for the scenario of which (as well as the costumes) Wilhelm was mainly responsible, though it was, as usual, choreographically arranged by Mme Katti Lanner, with delightful music by Leopold Wenzel. This ran until September, when *Round the Town* (a ballet of which the scenario was by the late George Edwardes and Mme Lanner) was staged, and proved so popular as a topical *divertissement* that it held the boards for months. The theatre was subsequently closed from October 27th to

November 2nd, 1893, owing to the intervention of the County Council.

One of the finest productions yet seen at a theatre which by now had become famous for its ballets, was *Faust*, first produced on May 6th, 1895. The scenario of this, as well as the costume designs, were by Mr. Wilhelm, and it was an ingenious variation of the Gounod version, the music not by Gounod either, but by Meyer Lutz and Ernest Ford, the ballet being arranged as usual by Mme Lanner. Mme Cavallazzi was superb as Faust ; Miss Ada Vincent, a charming Gretchen ; Mlle Zanfretta, a striking exponent of Mephistopheles ; and among the cast was Mr. Will Bishop, a clever eccentric dancer, who was associated with the Empire for several seasons. In January 1896, this was followed by a particularly fascinating ballet entitled *La Danse*, in which the history of dancing was illustrated, and various dancers of the older schools, such as Sallé, Taglioni and others, as well as the modern, were represented. *Monte Cristo* followed and was a superb production, staged and designed by Wilhelm, to whom I have been indebted for many interesting details of the Empire's history.

This brings to a close the record of success from the opening of the Empire in 1887 to the close of 1896. This first phase was one of increasing triumph ; a second, more splendid still, was to come. We had seen Ballet perfect of its kind. But perfection was yet to be crowned by the art of Adeline Genée.

*Under One Flag*, a topical ballet in celebration of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, in 1897, ran for some months. Before the close of the year the Treasure Island tableau in *Monte Cristo* was staged, and in this, on November 22nd, 1897, a certain historic event took place —Mlle Adeline Genée made her London *début* at the Empire Theatre.

One of her critics at the time wrote that : "Her *pas seuls* commanded encores which were thoroughly deserved. The dancer is lissom to a degree and thoroughly mistress of her art. With her terpsichorean ability she has the advantage of a prepossessing person-

ality, which will assist in endearing her to the public." So much did her personality endear her to the public that Mlle Genée's first engagement at the Empire for *six weeks* extended to over *ten years*, with return visits after that !

Looking back at the great dancers of the past, we see that all illustrate the incalculable value of personality in art. The technique of a Camargo or Sallé, Taglioni or Grahn, Karsavina or Genée, has the same foundation—the traditional "positions," which are to the Dance what the octave is to the sister art of Music. Before a dancer can hope to appear with success on any stage she must have acquired a knowledge of those "five positions," and their possibilities of choreographic combination. The ease and rapidity with which she performs them ; the fluidity of the phrases and melodies of movement which she evolves from them ; and the quality of *technique* and "style" is, finally, achieved only by incessant practice. She must attain as complete a mastery of the mechanism of her body as can be attained. No *technique* in any art is acquired without labour ; and no success is won without *technique*. That much, therefore, can be taken for granted in any great artist. But persistent practice and the acquisition of a fine *technique* may still leave a dancer merely an exquisite automaton, if she has not "personality" ; a quality not readily defined, but which undeniably marks her as different from others.

Endowed with the necessary personality, Mlle Genée had worked incessantly before she made her London *début*, when little more than a child. Born in Copenhagen of Danish parents, the famous dancer began her training when only eight years old, under the tuition of her uncle and aunt, M. and Mme Alexander Genée, both of whom (the latter as Mlle Zimmermann) had won considerable reputation as dancers, and producers of ballet, at various Continental opera-houses and theatres at Copenhagen, Vienna, Dresden, Munich and at Stettin, where M. Alexander Genée had a theatre for some years, and where Mlle Adeline made some of

her earliest appearances. Subsequently she went to Berlin and to Munich, and it was while dancing in the latter city that she was invited to come to London by the late George Edwardes, on behalf of the Empire management.

Her first appearance here was emphatically a success. But it was her performance as the Spirit of the "Liberty of the Press" in the famous Empire ballet, *The Press* (invented and designed by Wilhelm, with the choreography by Mme Lanner, and music by Wenzel), on February 14th, 1898, that first marked her—and for many years to come—as a London favourite. The ballet gave her scope for some wonderful *pas*, and proved immensely popular. It was a novel idea, artistically carried out, and illustrated the history and power of the Fourth Estate. A number of charming coryphées were ingeniously attired as representatives of the various newspapers; boys' costumes indicating the morning, and girls' the evening journals. The venerable *Times* was typified by a man in the guise of Father Time, with hour-glass and other symbols of his ancient office, and accompanied by a retinue. Mme Cavallazzi represented Caxton, Father of the Printing Press; Mlle Zanfretta, the Spirit of Fashion; and there were typical costumes for the *Morning Post*, the *Daily Telegraph*, the *Daily Mail* (then two years old!), the *Illustrated London News* (who announced that she was "Established 1842"), the *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, the *Lady's Pictorial*, the *Sketch*, the *Referee*, and others too numerous to name. So popular did the ballet prove that it ran for months, and it was not until October of the same year that a new production, *Alaska*, was staged, the scenario of which was by Wilhelm, choreography by Mme Lanner and music by Wenzel.

The production, which a contemporary critic described as "one of the most gorgeous ballets ever produced at the Empire," is another example of the influence of topical events on the history of the Ballet, for it was due to the discovery of the Klondyke gold-fields, the first news of which had come to us the year before, that is, in

Jubilee year, but the real wonders of which only began fully to reveal themselves in the summer of 1898, when everyone talked and dreamed of little else than "Klondyke!"

The ballet opened with a blinding snowstorm, and the scene, laid in the snow-bound regions of the North-West, glowed, as the storm ceased, with the grandeur of the aurora borealis. The story dealt with the adventures of a leader of an expedition to Klondyke, who, tempted by the Demon Avarice, quarrels with, and leaves for dead, his partner, whose life is saved by the ice-fairies, and who is vouchsafed by the Fairy Good Fortune a vision of golden realms. The production was rich in striking stage effects; and, once again, Mlle Genée confirmed her capacity to endear herself to London audiences by her performance as the Fairy Good Fortune.

On May 8th of the following year, 1899, *Round the Town Again*, by Mme Lanner, Wilhelm and Wenzel, was produced. This was entirely different from the original *Round the Town*, and with a second edition, also further altered, in January, 1900, ran until the end of August, 1900, that is, for fifteen months!

A revised edition of *By the Sea*, under the title of *Seaside*, came on in September, 1900, the cast including Mlle Genée, Signor Santini, Mr. Will Bishop and also Frank Lawton, whose whistling had so long been one of the attractions, elsewhere, of the *Belle of New York*.

Next came a fascinating ballet, *Les Papillons*, the scenario of which was by Wilhelm, and of this an enthusiastic critic declared: "It is, indeed, a beautiful butterfly ballet that the Empire Theatre is just now able to boast. With it the management draws crowded houses, and sends them away delighted—delighted with the colour, exhilarated by the movement, charmed by the fancy, and ready to sing the praises of all concerned in a truly marvellous production, and particularly of Mr. Wilhelm, whose designs have given further proof of the taste which governs his fertile imagination and invention, and of Mme Katti Lanner, for whom the

dances and evolutions mean another veritable triumph." Mlle Adeline Genée, as lead, played "Vanessa Imperialis," the Butterfly Queen, who was discovered at the opening of the ballet fast asleep in the lovely realm over which she reigned. A glow-worm patrol guarded her slumbers, which ended with the coming of dawn, when she joined her subjects and the flower-fays in dances and the revels of a fairy midsummer's day-dream.

Then, on November 6th of the same year, followed *Old China*, a delightful ballet, invented and designed by Wilhelm, and with Mlle Genée as *première danseuse*. The opening scene showed a mantelpiece, backed by a great mirror, in which the actions of a little Dresden China Shepherdess (Mlle Genée) and her two troublesome lovers were exactly repeated in the looking-glass, through which, finally, the indignant damsels stepped—to the chagrin of her disconsolate lovers—right into Willow Pattern Land, which formed the second scene, and into which some particularly rich and beautiful effects were introduced.

*Old China* ran for some months, and on May 28th of the following year was succeeded by another "topical" ballet, *Our Crown*. It was, of course, in celebration of that crowning of the late King Edward which had been postponed through his late Majesty's illness on the very eve of what should have been his coronation. This, again, was a most brilliant production, and the final tableau, practically a "Staircase" scene—in which the great stage was built up with groups representative of the jewelled products of the various British colonies, rubies, emeralds, diamonds, pearls—was magnificent. As in the case of the Victorian Jubilee ballet of five years before, this was a conspicuous triumph in the particularly difficult sphere of *ballets d'occasion*.

## CHAPTER XXIX

### *BALLET AT THE EMPIRE, 1903-1914*

THE first production at the Empire in 1903, *The Milliner Duchess*, was also the first of what may be called essentially the "Genée ballets"—ballets, that is, which seemed more particularly than before, infused with the personality of the brilliant dancer. Since her London *début* in 1897 she had played the leading part; but now it seemed almost as if her personality coloured the whole ballet itself, even as, unquestionably, her supreme *technique* had its influence in raising the already high standard throughout the *corps de ballet*.

The scenario and staging of *The Milliner Duchess* were by Wilhelm, and the story was specially designed to give Mlle Genée an opportunity of further exhibiting her gifts as an actress. Into a fashionable throng frequenting the establishment of an up-to-date duchess, who was running a milliner's business, was introduced her demure little niece, impersonated by Mlle Genée; and her first entrance, in a gown of primitively early-Victorian simplicity, was charming in its hesitancy; and one realised that she was something more even than a finished dancer, namely, a mime with a fine artistic appreciation of the *nuances* of comedy.

In her dance descriptive of the charms of country life, so perfect was the combination of mime and dance that a positive illusion was created; and only at the close did one realise suddenly that one had veritably *seen* a song without words. A step, a little gesture, a sudden glance, and one could have sworn one heard a poet's lines! Popular as Genée had already become, her work in this particularly charming ballet confirmed the growing opinion that here was a dancer who was supreme as a dancer-mime, and one to be ranked with the greatest dancers of the past.

In the autumn of 1903 was staged a ballet by the same experienced trio, Wilhelm, Lanner and Wenzel, entitled *Vineland*, which introduced some novel and sumptuous

colour-schemes, and gave us Mlle Genée's "champagne" dance, a gem as sparkling as the most glittering of Offenbach's operatic melodies. Early next year there followed the lively, up-to-date *divertissement*, *High Jinks*, in which the leading parts were played by Mlle Genée, Mlle Zanfretta, Miss Dorothy Craske and Fred Farren.

An adaptation from the popular Viennese ballet, *Die Puppenfee*, under the English title of *The Dancing Doll*, was produced on January 3rd, 1905, and was notable among other things for Mlle. Genée's clever impersonation of the automaton, and also for a delightful eccentric dance by Miss Elise Clerc and Mr. W. Vokes, as a pair of Dutch dolls. This very successful ballet went into a second edition on April 3rd ; and on June 30th the theatre was closed for redecoration.

When it reopened, on October 9th of that year, the *habitués* found considerable alterations had taken place under the direction of Mr. Frank Verity, F.R.I.B.A., and that the decorative style, representative of the true Empire period, had a note of distinction hitherto lacking in the London variety houses.

The opening ballet by Wilhelm, with music by Sidney Jones, was *The Bugle Call*, which had a well-defined story, and in which Mlle Genée played delightfully the part of a French bugler boy of the late eighteenth century.

On January 6th, 1906, a version of *Cinderella*, one of the most charming of Wilhelm's creations, was produced for matinée performance only, but, a month later, was transferred to the evening programme, and ran for months. The creator of the ballet had treated the age-long legend of *Cinderella* with that respect for its mingled poetry and pathos which any artist must always feel for one of childhood's most appealing legends ; and he provided Mlle Genée once more with an opportunity of proving her remarkable gifts as an actress.

Délibes' classic example of Ballet in its ideal form, namely, *Coppélia*, was produced on May 14th, specially for Genée, and gave her, as the heroine, Swanilda, fresh opportunity for further revelation of her brilliance

as a dancer, and for expressive acting ; in which, by the way, she was admirably supported by Mr. Fred Farren in the character of the old doll-maker, Coppélia ; and by handsome Miss Dorothy Craske as Coppélia's lover. The production was a great success, and it was followed, on August 6th, by one of the most exquisite productions the Empire had yet seen, namely *Fête Galante* by Wilhelm, which had been expanded from the opening scene of *Cinderella*.

To see the *Fête Galante* was itself a liberal education in the art of stage-effect. It was an ideal realisation of the art of Watteau, Lancret and Fragonard, and it was as if all that one had learnt at second-hand of the people, dress, manners, dances, arts and music of the "Grand Century" in France had suddenly awakened into life, and become a living reality of which one was a living part ; yet, paradoxically, it was strangely dream-like still, even as are Watteau's dreams in paint.

The scene represented a garden such as you see in so many of his paintings, and those of his school, primarily reminiscent of Pater's "Conversation Galante" and of Watteau's "Fête Galante," "L'Amour au Théâtre Français" and "Terrace Party," while one of the Court ladies reminded one of the central figure in Watteau's "Bal sous une Colonnade." A minuet was in progress ; all was stately and dream-like, made the more so by the music ; and for all the gaiety of the huntsmen's entrance, it was demurely gay, as if restrained by an inherent sense of fitness with stately surroundings ; and so with the troupe of dancers, introduced for the diversion of the Marquise Belle Étoile, and the court ladies and courtiers grouped about her. The mood of all, demurely gay, or gaily demure, was suffused with a stately languor, a dream-like grace that found an echo in the subtle colour-harmonies of the old-world garden in which the people moved. And when the opera-dancer, L'Hirondelle, and Passepied, master of the revels, began their *pas de deux*, the climax of exquisite illusion was reached, and Camargo was before us—the Camargo of Lancret's

famous picture, with the soft, full white skirts, trimmed with garlands of small pink roses and falling almost to the ankle ; Camargo with the red-heeled, red-rosetted shoes ; with blue shoulder-knot, and powdered hair adorned with pale blue ribbons.

As the fête drew to a close, the picture mellowed in the amber light of a waning day ; and, amid fallen leaf and chestnut bloom, slowly marquise and prince, court lady and courtier, dancer and page, began to dance, in stately fashion, their shadows lengthening in the failing light, the music growing slower and dreamier as, little by little, the picture was reformed into the likeness of the opening scene, and the falling curtain brought one back into the world of living things to-day.

Another artistic reconstruction of the Past was achieved by Wilhelm in his creation of *The Débutante* (November 15th, 1906), which revivified the men and maids and *môdes*, the dance of life and the life of the Dance, of that strangely interesting period of the 'thirties and 'forties of last century, the days of Pauline Duverney, Leroux, Fanny Elssler, and Taglioni's earlier years.

The scene represented the *Salon de Danse* attached to an opera house, the story dealing with the refusal of a star to take up her part in a ballet which is on the eve of production, her place being taken at the eleventh hour by a *débutante* (Mlle Genée) of almost miraculous abilities. The ballet was charming, of interest both to lovers of dance and mime, and it proved so successful that a new one was not required until *Sir Roger de Coverley*, by the late Adrian Ross and Dr. Osmond Carr, staged by Wilhelm, came into the bill six months later, on May 7th in the following year. As its title betokens, it dealt with the period of Queen Anne, and showed a charming representation of the life of old Vauxhall. This, too, ran for some months, and was succeeded on September 30th by *The Belle of the Ball*, which delighted many old frequenters of the Empire with its recollection of scenes from many of the earlier operatic favourites of the 'sixties and 'seventies, such as *Madame Angot*, *The*

*Grand Duchess* and other light operas, coming up to more recent productions, such as *The Belle of New York*, *The Geisha* and others.

The production marked the *début* of a brilliant and very young English dancer, Miss Phyllis Bedells. It was also the climax of Mlle Genée's unbroken ten years' reign at the Empire Theatre, the tenth anniversary of her first appearance being celebrated on November 22nd, when the house was packed from floor to ceiling with a crowd whose growing enthusiasm culminated in storms of applause on the fall of the curtain and something over a score of "calls"; the dancer having achieved by her personality and technique such a triumph as had not been known in London since the great days of Taglioni and the famous *pas de quatre* of the 'forties.

When the news was first announced that an end was to come to Mlle Adeline Genée's ten-years' reign at the Empire and that the famous dancer was to tour America, many who had followed the progress of Ballet in London must have wondered where anyone could hope to find a successor to her throne, and who would have the courage to accept an offer thereof. But London theatrical managers are not lacking in resource, or English girls in courage; and it was with real pleasure that we heard that so worthy a successor had been found as that graceful and essentially English dancer, Miss Topsy Sinden, who, as a child, had already been associated with the Empire in earlier years.

Following on Genée's triumph in *The Belle of the Ball* the production was revised, and the fact that the new version was still in the bill on the following June 1st, proved the popularity of the production, and of the Empire's choice of Miss Sinden as *première danseuse*. Her success was the more interesting in that, in temperament and in methods, she was entirely different from the famous Danish dancer.

Miss Sinden had had long and invaluable stage experience before becoming *première danseuse* at the Empire; had appeared in pantomime at Covent

Garden, Drury Lane and elsewhere ; had been on the Halls ; had appeared at the Haymarket under Sir H. Beerbohm Tree's management ; and at the Gaiety in *Cinderella Up-to-Date*, *In Town*, *Don Juan*, *The Gaiety Girl* and *The Shop Girl* ; at Daly's in *The Greek Slave*, in *The Country Girl* and other productions ; and always she had won fresh distinction as one of the most vivacious and graceful English dancers the London stage had known.

Her appearance in *The Belle of the Ball* was marked by a most cordial welcome from Press and public, and one of the first greetings she received on her return to the Empire was a telegram from Brighton which ran as follows : " My good wishes, and I hope you will do yourself justice. You are one of the best dancers I know. Adeline Genée." That Miss Sinden did do herself justice was seen in the enthusiastic cheers which greeted her at the close of her scenes on that " big night " of her appearance at the Empire.

*The Belle of the Ball* gave place to a revival of *Coppélia*, and—the return of Mlle Adeline Genée. Many as her triumphs had been during her ten years' unbroken reign, that Wednesday night, June 10th, 1908, must surely be recorded in Genée's memory in letters of gold, for even she can never have seen a house so crammed from floor to ceiling with a distinguished audience, including H.M. King George (then H.R.H. the Prince of Wales), or been welcomed with such thunderous applause as greeted her on her first appearance through the little brown door of Swanilda's balconied house, when she floated down the stairs to the centre of the stage, so lightly indeed, that she seemed almost to flutter before the storm of enthusiasm which welcomed her return. And how she danced ! Only her peer among poets could describe it, and then he would probably feel as Thackeray felt when endeavouring to do justice to Taglioni in *Sylphide* !

During the past twenty years or so we have had the Russian ballet with us as a more or less permanent delight, but it is interesting to note that the *first* of " all

the Russias" was Mlle Lydia Kyasht, who made her London *début* at the Empire, in some dances with M. Adolph Bolm, on August 17th, 1908. For the present, and to preserve historical order, let the fact be merely recorded.

On September 7th of that year came the production of one of the most perfect gems in the historic gallery of Ballet at the Empire, namely, *The Dryad*, a pastoral fantasy in two tableaux, of which the music was by Miss Dora Bright. From time to time, in such productions as *The Milliner Duchess*, *Coppélia*, and *The Débutante*, we had had an opportunity of realising something of Mlle Genée's gifts as an actress apart from her supremacy as a dancer, but it was mainly as a dancer, surrounded by dancers, that we had seen her. Now, however, we were to have a conclusive revelation of the fact that Mlle Genée was also a singularly dramatic actress. The story, of which she was the heroine, gave her an opportunity of proving that; and with herself in the title-*rôle*, that artistic singer, Mr. Gordon Cleather, as a shepherd, and the support of expressive and beautifully orchestrated *mimodrame* music, the sister arts of dance, song, mime and music, were brought together to give us a balanced harmony of lovely and memorable impressions.

The fantasy told how a Dryad, fairest of Wood Nymphs, subdued all mortals by her charm and the magic of her dancing, and how the implacable Aphrodite had imprisoned her in an oak tree, only granting her freedom to come forth once in every ten years, between sunset and sunrise, until she should find a mortal faithful to her during the allotted period. A shepherd, passing through the wood on the night of her freedom, sees her dancing beneath the moon and is lured to love her and vow eternal constancy. When the dawn breaks she bids him farewell and re-enters the tree, which closes around her. After ten years have passed, the Dryad comes forth again seeking to allay the longing she has kindled, but her lover had not been constant, and the wood is empty. She dances through the night,

deluding herself with hope until the hour of her doom returns and she is compelled to re-enter the tree.

The Dryad, afire with joy at being released from the imprisoning tree, and discovering the beauty of the flower-strewn forest glade ; joyous in her love of the handsome shepherd, and his love returned ; her sorrow at parting to return to the tree ; her deeper joy on renewed release ; her alternating hope and fear as the concluding moment of the ten-year tryst draws nigh ; her eager search for her lover ; the shuddering tremors of doubt as, at first, she fails to find him ; her triumphant happiness as she hears his voice ; the poignant suspense, and then overwhelming despair, as she finds he has forgotten her for another love and passes on his way, leaving her solitary and doomed to be imprisoned yet again within the tree, desolate amid autumnal desolation ; these, and a thousand more *nuances* expressive of poetic emotion, were suggested by Genée with a sureness, a sensitiveness, a depth of instinctive dramatic ability that astonished and enthralled.

So great was the success of *The Dryad* that Genée's engagement was extended ; but, the strain of appearing in both *The Dryad* and *Coppélia* proving too great, the famous dancer reserved her strength for her final appearance in *The Dryad*, and Mlle Lydia Kyasht took up the part of "Swanilda" in Délibes' masterpiece. Ere departing for a forty weeks' tour of America, Mlle Genée gave a farewell "professional" *matinée* at the Empire, at which everyone of note in "the" profession was present, and gave her the same enthusiastic appreciation as had always been accorded by the general public.

Following Genée's departure for America, and Mlle Kyasht's successful appearance in *Coppélia*, came the production on October 19th, 1908, of a ballet in five scenes by Lieut.-Colonel Newnham-Davis, entitled *A Day in Paris*, produced by Mr. Fred Farren, with music by Mr. Cuthbert Clarke, the entire production being designed and supervised by Wilhelm.

On the occasion of her previous appearance Mlle Kyasht's name had been printed in the programme as

Mlle Lydia Kyaksht, and I remember well the humorous dismay the late Mr. H. J. Hitchins expressed to me as he asked : " How can one pronounce a name like that ? " and the eagerness with which he welcomed my suggestion that it would be easier if the second " k " were omitted. " Kyasht " it became, and it is as Mlle Kyasht that we shall always remember the handsome dancer who was first of the Russians to win a following in London. She had, of course, received her training at the Russian Imperial Theatre, appearing there for some eight months each year, and at Monte Carlo and other fashionable centres for the remaining months, before she made her London *début*. She had little of that vehemence and abandon which has characterised some of the Russian school, but she had, *au fond*, the same *technique*, a finely balanced figure and personal beauty, and her first appearances with that fine dancer, M. Adolf Bolm, in national dances and *pas de ballet*, evoked the most cordial admiration.

*A Day in Paris* was notable not only for the appearance of the new Russian *première* in a couple of *pas seuls* and an extremely charming *Danse Russe*, but for the clever acting and step-dancing of Mr. Fred Farren, who as a Montmartre student, freakishly officiating as " a man from Cook's " to a party of tourists, proved himself a born comedian ; while in association with that lithe and graceful dancer, Miss Beatrice Collier, his *Danse des Apaches* was one of the " sensations " of the production. Another member of the company who, though but a child, achieved a great success, was Miss Phyllis Bedells, who did some wonderful toe-dancing with, and without, a skipping-rope. The ballet was one of the liveliest of many such topical and essentially " modern " entertainments at the Empire ; and it ran from October, 1908, well into the next summer.

Yet again, Mlle Adeline Genée returned to the scene of her former triumphs to add one more, this time in the famous *ballet-divertissement* from the third act of Meyerbeer's opera, *Robert the Devil*, which was produced by her uncle, M. Alexandre Genée, on July 3rd, 1909,

the *mise en scène* and costumes being designed and supervised by Wilhelm. Once more we had an opportunity of enjoying a perfect representation of one of the classics of Ballet, in which Mlle Adeline Genée appeared as the Spirit of Elena, the abbess who haunts a ruined Sicilian convent. It was a fine and *spirituelle* performance, and a fitting crown to what we may perhaps be allowed to call Mlle Genée's Imperial career.

This was followed on October 9th, 1909, by *Round the World*, a new dramatic ballet in six scenes, by Lieutenant-Colonel Newnham-Davis and Wilhelm, the entire production being designed and supervised by the latter, and the dances arranged by Fred Farren, who himself played the part of a resourceful chauffeur, while Kyasht impersonated the lovely heroine, Natalia, a Russian gipsy girl, and Phyllis Bedells, her younger brother, Dmitri. The story concerned the winning of a wager by the hero, who had to circle the world in a month ; and the course of his adventures took us from the grounds of the Monaco Club to the Place Krasnaia, Moscow, on the occasion of a wonderfully realised national fête, where he rescues Natalia and her brother from Tzabor, a brutal proprietor of a troupe of gipsy dancers. The third scene was on the Siberian railway ; the fourth, a lovely scene at Tokio, in the Garden of Ten Thousand Joys, where the hero is nearly poisoned ; the fifth, 'Frisco, in "One-eyed Jack's" saloon, with a capital *Duo Mexicain* for Fred Farren and pretty Miss Unity More ; the sixth and last scene being laid in the foyer of the Empire Theatre. The production in the variety of its scenes and the excitement of its story was a sort of cinema-ballet, and gave scope for a number of attractive and characteristic dances from Mlle Kyasht, Fred Farren and Miss Phyllis Bedells. It proved so popular that it ran on into 1910, when, on March 21st of that year, it went into a second edition called *East and West*.

In the July of 1910 came a delightful *ballet-divertissement*, *The Dancing Master*, by Wilhelm, adapted from the first scene of his earlier success, *The Débutante*, the period chosen—that of 1835—affording a delightful opportunity



MISS KIRBY GINNIER  
President of the Association of Teachers of the Revived Greek Dance.

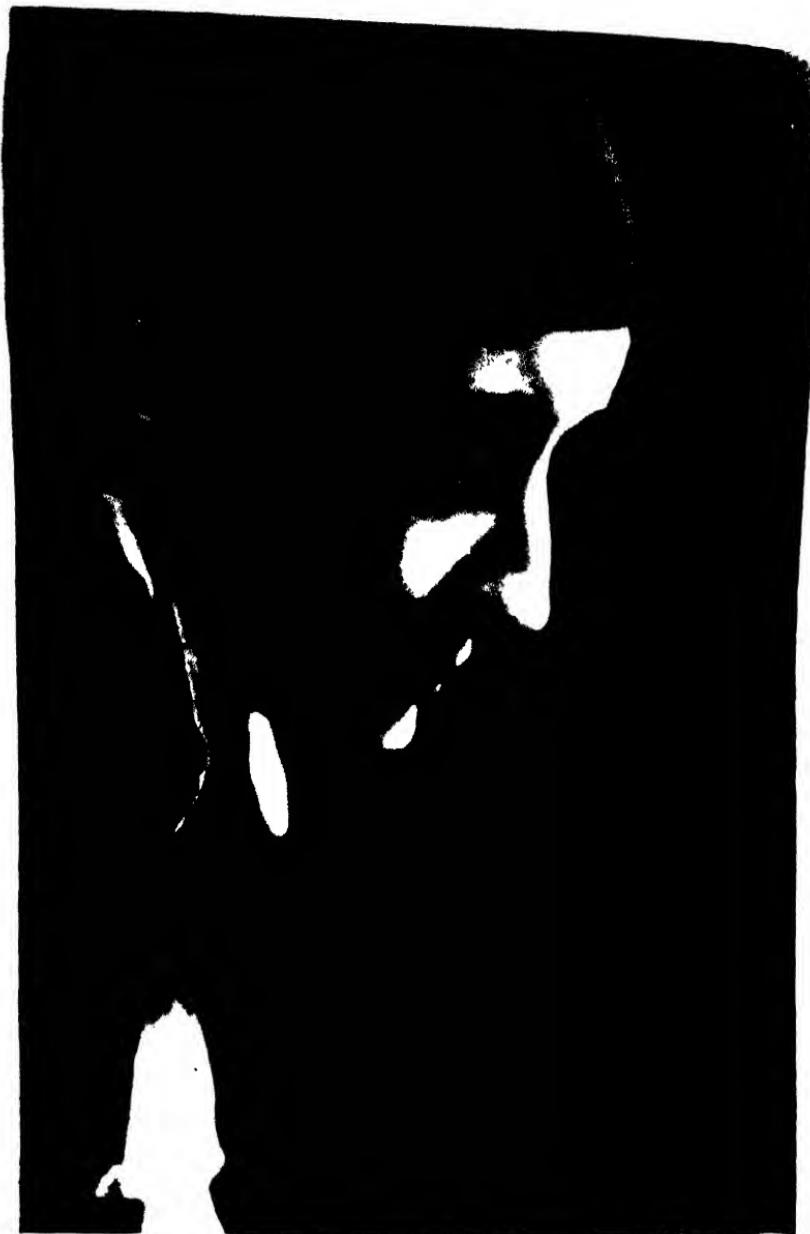


Photo: Pollard Croathc

MISS TRIENE MAWER

President of the Institute of Mime, here seen as Perrot in *L'Enfant Prodigue*.

for a quaint and picturesque *ensemble* of "early-Victorian," or slightly pre-Victorian, character and costume. Fred Farren repeated his excellent character-study of M. Pirouette, the excitable *maitre de ballet* at the Opera House ; Kyasht made a handsome impersonator of Mimi the *débutante* : and Phyllis Bedells added to her laurels as Mlle Lutine, the clever head pupil. On August 8th of the same year Miss Bedells took up Kyasht's part of Mimi during the latter's absence on a holiday, and made a great hit as a bewitching representative of the *débutante*.

On October 10th following, Mlle Kyasht and Mr. Fred Farren appeared in another of Miss Dora Bright's poetic fantasies, *The Faun*, in which the former played Ginestra, a little flower-girl, and the latter appeared in the title-*rôle* as a marble faun who comes to life when sprinkled with water from a magic fountain. The production, designed and supervised by Wilhelm, was enchanting in its blending of legend and mystery with sunny naturalism in presentation.

A contrast to the classic grace of this Tuscan idyll was seen in the following month when *Ship Ahoy !* a nautical one-scene *divertissement* by Wilhelm, with music by Cuthbert Clarke, was staged by Fred Farren, who also arranged the dances. It was a lively production, with plenty of fun and a dash of melodrama, the fun being contributed mainly by Fred Farren as a dandy young officer on leave, and for all his "dudism," wide-aware enough to frustrate the horrid machinations of a treacherous Ayah (originally played by Miss Beatrice Collier, and, later, by Miss Carlotta Mossetti) and her accomplice.

Once more we had a classic ballet when, on May 18th, 1911, Délibes' *Sylvia*, which, originally in five tableaux, was compressed by Wilhelm into one for production at the Empire. With its mythological story and charming sylvan setting, *Sylvia*—first produced at the Paris Opera on June 14th, 1876—has always been popular on the Continent ; and it is curious that London should have had to wait some twenty-five years before again seeing

a ballet, selections from which had long been familiar as *entr'acte*-music for theatre orchestras ; but it was worth waiting for to see it so admirably staged.

Another contrast followed in the extremely modern and somewhat formless production, *New York*, a ballet in two scenes, by Lieutenant-Colonel Newnham-Davis, in which seemingly every form of American eccentricity in dancing was introduced.

Early in the next year, a brief but graceful Dance Episode was staged, *The Water Nymph*, arranged by Mlle Kyasht, who followed on September 24th with another, entitled *First Love*, in which she was supported by M. Alexander Volinin. This was followed on February 11th, 1913, by another fanciful ballet-idyll, *The Reaper's Dream*, in which Mlle Kyasht appeared as the "Spirit of the Wheatsheaf," seen and pursued in his dream by the reaper (Miss F. Martell) ; while Miss Phyllis Bedells made a dazzling personage as "Sun-Ray," flitting in and out the autumn cornfield which formed the setting for some very pretty dances by the three ladies and the excellent Empire *corps de ballet*.

One of the most artistic productions at the Empire in its later years was the choral ballet in three tableaux : *Titania*, which, adapted, of course, from Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream*, was arranged and produced by Kyasht and by Wilhelm. It is interesting to note that this was not the first time a Shakespeare play had been so treated. No less a person than the great Dryden had adapted *The Tempest* at a time, shortly before the Great Fire of London, when Sir William Davenant was producing "dramatic operas" at a theatre designed by Wren, the Duke's Theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields, which he held under a patent granted in 1662 by Charles II. These, as an earlier historian records, were "all set off with the most expensive decorations of scenes and habits, with the best voices and dancers."

Then, too, it was but a return to early history to give us *vocal* ballet, for all the earliest ballets on the French stage were always described as "opera-ballets," long declamatory and choral scenes being interspersed with

dances. Lulli, Rameau, Mouret, Campra and Monteverde were among the composers of such ballets, many of which, musically at least, seem wonderfully fresh to-day. This, however, is but a digression. *Titania*, at the Empire, was a very graceful and poetic production, quite fairy-like enough, one feels, to have delighted even Shakespeare himself, with Kyasht as a truly regal-looking Titania, Mr. Leonid Joukoff as a dignified Oberon, Unity More as a nimble Puck (a part played later very cleverly by Miss Ivy St. Helier), and Phyllis Bedells as an enchanting "first fairy," Philomel. On Mlle Kyasht's departure for America, the part of Titania was taken up by Miss Bedells, who added yet another to her growing list of artistic successes.

A new edition of *The Dancing Master* was subsequently staged and was notable for some brilliant dancing by Miss Bedells, and by Mr. Edouard Espinosa in the title rôle, by whom it was produced. Mr. Espinosa, by the way, forms an interesting link with the historic past. As the son of Mons. Leon Espinosa (1825-1903), an *Officier D'Académie*, Mr. Edouard is heir of a great tradition, and has worthily sustained the heritage. His father was a pupil of seven of the great masters of the early nineteenth century, namely, Coulon (1820), Henri (1821), Albert (1829), Perrot (1831), Coralli (1831), Taglioni (1834) and Petitpa (1839), to most of whom reference has already been made, and who were themselves, variously, pupils of the previous generation of masters, including Vestris, Noverre, Gardel and Dauberval—who, in turn, were tutored by Pécourt and Beauchamps in the reign of Louis Quatorze. Mr. Edouard Espinosa himself is a fine teacher of the classic and traditional school, with a rare knowledge of the history of the Dance.

*Europe*, a topical and patriotic *divertissement*, invented, designed and produced by Wilhelm (who, despite his *nom du théâtre*, bore an English name), achieved, on its first performance on September 7th, 1914, an instant success. It was worthy of the best traditions of the Empire Theatre. The choice of such a theme as the

condition of Europe, just before and during the greatest war in history, might have been called into question on the score of taste, and in the hands of any but a fine artist might have easily been trivialised. But the subject was treated with dramatic ability and poetic dignity, and the production, passing from the comparative lightness of the first scene, into the more serious note of the second, attained to a high level of art in the patriotic symbolism of the third, and offered a tableau worthy the brush of any great English painter of historical subjects.

Subsequently came *The Vine*, an Arcadian dance-idyll, invented, designed and supervised by Wilhelm, while it was produced and the dances were arranged by Fred Farran. It was superbly staged, and proved one of the most original, picturesque and dramatic productions seen at the Empire. Miss Phyllis Bedells' impersonation of the Spirit of the Vine seemed to have in it something of Dionysiac fire, and revealed her not only as an exquisite dancer, but a sensitive and temperamental actress, and Miss Carlotta Mossetti, another very expressive and sympathetic mime, exhibited a sense of classic inspiration in her study of the young Shepherd tempted by the Vine-Spirit.

So runs, in brief, the pre-war chronicle of Ballet at the Empire, one which, if overshadowed in later years by that somewhat casual type of entertainment, "Revue" (which, in turn, gave way to the all-conquering cinema), is a nevertheless remarkable record when one remembers that of the sixty or more ballets produced at the famous house in twenty-seven years all were commercially, as well as artistically successful, and that the theatre had not received State aid, as have the Continental opera-houses where Ballet has been a permanent attraction.

Thoughtless folk, who know little or nothing of the hard, incessant toil that goes to make a dancer, or of the artistic training, thought and feeling that go to make a designer or producer of Ballet, often speak lightly of a type of theatrical production in which are

blended colour, form movement and music into a balanced harmony of varied arts under the term the art of Ballet. They rank it, usually, somewhere lower than Drama or Opera. But the placing of colour in a colour-scheme requires quite as delicate a taste as the placing of a word in a sentence, or a chord in a phrase of music ; the introduction of a dancer or a group needs just as critical a care as the introduction of a character in play or opera ; and the telling of the story, albeit mutely mimed, may be just as dramatic in effect as in any verbal drama.

The art of Ballet is a complex and beautiful art, at its best very beautiful ; and those who are prone to dismiss it lightly as a thing that more or less occurs of itself, and of slight account as a vehicle for the deliberate expression of beauty, should rather feel proud to think that at the old Empire Theatre in London we had, in the course of a quarter of a century, Ballet of such artistic range and quality as to place it among the few vital forms of art during the later years of the nineteenth and earlier years of twentieth-century London.

## CHAPTER XXX

### *MEMORIES—RUSSIAN AND OTHERWISE*

**A** REAL love of dancing has always been an English characteristic, and Londoners especially have supported artistic ballet as often as they have had an opportunity.

The Elizabethan masques ; ballet-dancers imported by Rich, in the reign of Anne ; and by Garrick, later ; by Lumley, at Her Majesty's, in the eighteen-forties ; the native productions of Ballet at the Empire and Alhambra for over a quarter of a century ; and, since then, imported Russian ballet, have all met with enthusiastic support, and the support has been as catholic as it has been cordial.

Dancers, of all types, whether of the traditional Operatic school or otherwise, have readily found their way into popular favour. Glancing back over theatrical memories, elderly dance-lovers may recall with pleasure seeing at the Palace Theatre that statuesque and very graceful dancer, Mimi St. Cyr, in a delightful little miniature ballet, *La Baigneuse*, a dance-scena invented by the late George R. Sims, in which she lured to life the fountain-statue of a piping faun. Some may also recall a dancer of very different school, Lottie Collins, whose “Tarrara-boom-de-ay” was the craze of a year or two.

Then, in more recent times, came the sensational success of Miss Maud Allan, who presented us with the somewhat mystical definition of dancing as “the spontaneous expression of a spiritual state.” Admirers, particularly feminine devotees, flocked to the Palace Theatre to see Miss Maud Allan dance in a manner which some may have considered was of much the same barefoot school, though temperamentally different, as that of Isadora Duncan, who had given us dances of a rather similar order some ten years before. But Miss Allan revealed an astonishing flexibility of movement that was seen to particular advantage in her graceful and expressive dances to the music of Chopin

and other classic masters ; and her "Salome," a melodrama in dancing, created a sensation.

Mme Pavlova, who also first appeared at the Palace Theatre, was an extremely brilliant and fascinating *danseuse* of the classic operatic school, the basis of which was defined a century or more ago, and she herself was one of its most perfect exponents. Mons. Mordkin, who appeared with her, was superb, and it was no wonder that the first appearance of these two artists in their wonderful *pas de deux*, *L'Automne Bacchanale*, should have fired some of our best dramatic critics to enthusiastic expressions of admiration. But to the great art of Pavlova it will be more fitting to refer presently, in discussing the fine qualities of the Russian school.

One could hardly close a reference to the Palace Theatre, however, without a passing word of grateful praise to that bevy of bright young dancers, the "Palace Girls." As people of catholic enough taste to enjoy *all* dancing that is good in itself—from the vigorous cellar-flap of the street urchin to the aerial *pas* of a Pavlova—we may agree that, in a sense, the Palace, in its days as a "vaudeville" theatre, was all the more attractive for the "Palace Girls." Somehow the modern comedic spirit appears to express itself best in short skirts, shapely legs and a jolly smile ; and in their charm, neatness, agility, precision and *enfantine* gaiety the "Palace Girls" always seemed to focalise supremely well the spirit of "vaudeville," and to symbolise the attractions of music-hall modernity.

Again, at the London Hippodrome, in many a Christmas entertainment, ingeniously arranged and gorgeously staged, half pantomime, half ballet, we had, in the earlier years of this century, positive feasts of dancing ; and, apart from the spectacular productions for which the Hippodrome was then famous, many a delightful solo dancer and dance-scena was featured there.

To have seen there those exquisite artists, the Wiesenthal Sisters, is to have ineffaceable memories of a stage-art that seemed in a curious manner to link up the classic

simplicity of ancient Greece with the Watteau-esque artifice of the eighteenth century, and yet again, with the clear-seeing artistry, the supreme and joyous colour-sense of latter-day decorative art. The tone and hue of their chosen background ; the simple yet daring colour-scheme of their dress ; the thoughtful, almost dreamy grace of their every pose and movement ; the purely picture-like effect of their whole performance, all summed up that newer spirit in art that seemed ever striving for revolt from older methods and stereotyped traditions, and to achieve something simpler, clearer, more direct and, be it said, more beautiful and vital than we had known, the art, in fact, of a future age, albeit while basing its inspiration on the eternal past. The Wiesenthal Sisters were not mere "performers," they were poems.

Elsewhere, at various houses, what other dancers have we seen of individual distinction ? Who can now recall the sensation caused by the late Miss Loie Fuller on her first appearance in London some years ago as introducer of a curious form of dance in which the stage-effects she achieved were the paramount attraction. And what effects they were—kaleidoscopic, magic, wonderful ! Just a woman with a brain and shapely form, a mass of filmy draperies floating here and there, on which were shed the splendour of changing coloured lights, so that she seemed now some wondrous butterfly, now like a mass of cloud suffused with the gold of dawn, now like a fountain of living flame !

Then there was Miss Ruth St. Denis at the Scala—a vision of all the poetry and the mystery of the East. Ruth St. Denis in an Indian market-place representing a snake-dance, making cobras of her flexible arms and hands ! Ruth St. Denis as a Buddhist acolyte in the jungle ! Ruth St. Denis in a "Dance of the Senses," so significantly poetic and full of strange allure. Always the glamour of the East, but without its menace and without its vice ; the East exalted and austere. Moreau himself might have envied her those dreams of form and colour she made manifest ; and all who saw her

surely must have realised that Ruth St. Denis danced her lovely pictures as an artist born.

Yet another artist of marked individuality and artistic distinction, Isadora Duncan, was really the first to appear in London who showed any original ability to break away from the traditional schools of ballet and step-dancing, and, casting back to the days of ancient Greece, deliberately to use movement as a means of expressing poetic ideas. I first saw her when she appeared, on February 22nd, 1900, in a performance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, one of a series of Shakespearian revivals which Sir F. R. Benson was giving at the old Lyceum. She had but lately arrived from America, and was fired with enthusiasm for the art of classic days, an enthusiasm which found free expression in her dance as a wood-nymph in a Shakespearian production which I still remember as one of the most beautiful I have seen. Shortly after she gave a special *matinée* at the old St. George's Hall, entitled *The Happier Age of Gold*, at which idylls of Theocritus, poems by Swinburne and other poets of classic inspiration were recited to music, and were either accompanied or followed by an appropriate dance designed and performed by Miss Duncan, who also set herself the task of interpreting well-known musical *morceaux* by means of a dance.

One of the items on her programme was Mendelssohn's *Spring Song*, which received a thoroughly graceful and sympathetic interpretation. Miss Duncan, subsequently, appeared in London frequently, and all dance-lovers will remember the extraordinary charm of the series of *matinées* which she gave at the Duke of York's Theatre at which she introduced a number of child pupils. There was nothing meretricious or pretentious then about the work of Isadora Duncan. It was marked by classic dignity and poetic charm, and to her, certainly, so far as London is concerned, belongs the credit of having first introduced a form of dancing which was, in those earlier years, only too often parodied under the term of "classic dancing"; and even as she was the first, so in my humble judgment she was, for

her period, the best and truest exponent of a school which was justified by the beauty of its results, results which might have been more beneficially enduring had but her art been founded on a firmer cultural and temperamental basis. But her work as a pioneer in the classic field has, of course, been superseded since by that of a more scholarly and greater artist, Miss Ruby Ginner, to whose achievement in establishing a sound technical basis for the Revived Greek Dance further reference must presently be made.

Then again it was at the Coliseum that we were first enchanted with the Russian Ballet. They were not the first Russian dancers seen in London, for Mlle Kysht and Mme Pavlova had preceded them ; but they were the first collective example of Russian Ballet from the Moscow and Petrograd Opera Houses, and it was here we first saw Mlle Karsavina, one of the most supremely finished and *elegante* dancers it has been London's good fortune to see. What lightness, what purity and dignity of style, what perfect execution and perfect ease, and what poetic charm ! Her *variation* in the *Sylphide* was a revelation of classic art of the traditional school, and howsoever some may prefer one "school" to another there will always be supporters of a training which assists the evolution of such artists, for it is a sure training with sure and gracious results, certainly in this case one of superb technique and exquisite beauty.

There is much in tradition when all is said and done, and one has to remember that while even an iconoclastic "Futurist" cannot help creating tradition in attempting to abolish it, and while the purely "operatic" school of dancing may not be the one and only kind which can give delight, it must command the respect that is due to any art which respects its own traditions and can produce such dancers as Mme Karsavina and those first associated with her at the Coliseum.

More recently we were to see at the same house Mme Adeline Genée, who made welcome reappearances in *La Danse*—first produced, I believe, at the Metropolitan Opera House, New York—which formed a series of

representations of the dances and dancers of the historic past, practically a collection of little cameos of the dance, having for dancers a distinctive educational value in presenting a veritable re-creation of some of the great stars of Ballet in the past, from Prévôt to Taglioni ; in all of which the world-famous dancer exhibited those same high qualities of artistry that she had ever done, and which had won her fame in former years at the Empire and have enabled her to become of such great and beneficial influence in the dance profession ever since.

But among the many dance productions seen at the Coliseum, probably the two most satisfactory, judged as ballet, were the production of Wilhelm's *Camargo*, with Mlle Genée in the title rôle ; and M. Kosloff's production of *Scheherazade*, the two forming an outstanding contrast in one's memory. The former, with the quiet dignity, soft light and sumptuous stage embellishments of furniture and décors, and the dream-like quality assumed by the characters in this rich and harmonious setting. One found in it something of that visionary quality which gave the peculiar charm to the "Versailles" production of which I spoke in referring to the Empire. The music and the acting were so expressive that one did not miss the words ; and yet, half-consciously, one knew they were not there, just because of the dream-like atmosphere which the music itself so helped to create.

The royal grace and dignity of Louis-Quinze, the butterfly vivacity of Camargo herself, the more vital and quieter actions of her young soldier lover for whose misdeeds she pleads for pardon from the King, were all but dream figures in a dream, and it was as if the veil of the past had been suddenly drawn aside and one had a glimpse of a former century seen through the half-light of early dawn. Once more Genée excelled herself in doing apparently impossible things with consummate ease ; and once more one was glad to welcome the expressive work of so accomplished a musician as Miss Dora Bright.

There was nothing of the cool and dream-like quality, however, about M. Kosloff's *Scheherazade*. Exotic, bizarre, palpitant with warmth and colour, the production stormed the imagination with its extravagance of hue and tone, even as the tangled rhythms and seductive melodies of the music captured the hearing and through it subdued the mind to a sort of dazzled wonder. It was a stupendous achievement, the more so in that it was brief.

At various times and at various places we have seen in London during the past twenty years or so every form of dance and ballet it would seem could possibly exist : "sand" dances ; "buck" dances ; "hypnotic" dances ; "Salome" dances ; "vampire" dances ; "Apache," "Viennese," Egyptian, Russian, "Inspirational" dancers, and even English ballet-dancers in an all-British ballet. Not only at the regular vaudeville houses and theatres, however, were to be found genuine appreciation of the British dance and dancer. Elsewhere an English school of dance has been displayed, and that in a form for which the English nation was famous in Shakespeare's time.

Henley made his plea for "Gigues, Gavottes and Minuets," but there are many other lovely, or lovelier, examples of old-world dance to old-world music, which scholarship had revived and good taste has eagerly accepted wherever they were seen—*pavane*, *chaconne*, *coranto*, *galliarde*, *bourrée*, *rigaudon*, *passepied* and *sarabande*. These, and other ancient dances, were, as we know, the delight of the Courts of Queen Elizabeth, of Charles II, of Anne, of Louis Quatorze—*le Grand Monarque*, of Louis Seize and Marie Antoinette. Many have been revived and performed to the music of the harpsichord, violin, viola, viol-d'amour and 'cello ; and the curious thing—or, rather, interesting thing, for it really is not strange—is that both to scholars and to those unlearned in their history, to cultured townsman or woman, and to country lad and lass, to bored frequenters of the West End drawing-room, and to those who find only in their dreams relief from the sordidness

of an East End environment, this old-world dance and music make an instant appeal.

I saw this put to the test once when, at a hall in the somewhat dingy neighbourhood of Bethnal Green, a performance of the *Ancient Music and Dances*, arranged by the late Miss Nellie Chaplin, was received by an audience of East End work-people with such whole-hearted enthusiasm that practically every item was encored.

A *galliarde* of the seventeenth century, an *allemande* by an English composer, Robert Johnson (1540–1626), Handel's Oboe Concerto (1734), a *sarabande* by Destouches (1672), "Lady Elizabeth Spencer's Minuet" performed at Blenheim in 1788—all these and other historically interesting items were encored by this East End audience not because of the historic interest of such dances, but simply because of their vital joyousness and charm; while a *bourrée* by Mouret (1742) and the fascinating Old English dance, "Once I loved a maiden fair" (one of a group including "Althea, Lord of Carnarvon's Jig," and Stanes' Morris dance), had to be given three times. This was all complimentary, of course, to the way in which the dances and music were performed; but it was an interesting revelation of the eternal appeal to humanity of really beautiful art; and certainly the centuries are bridged with ease by the charm and joyousness of these old-time dances performed to the music of their period.

Truly, every known form of dance and type of dancer seems to have been seen in London since the beginning of this century, and at Covent Garden, at Drury Lane; and in recent years we have again had such ballet as had not been seen in England since the 'forties of last century.

Early in last century Carlo Blasis brought the Milan school to perfection, and thence went teachers to Paris, Vienna, Dresden, Moscow, St. Petersburg, carrying, wherever they went, something of the artistic spirit and culture of their master. But since those days probably nowhere has the ballet moved with the times as in Russia, and been so imbued with the new artistic spirit

which has been at work throughout Europe within the past generation.

Painter, musician, poet, dramatist and *maître de ballet*, have been called on to produce the homogeneous and distinctive spectacle which we call the Russian ballet, and one has to recall but a few examples from the earlier Russian *repertoire* to note with what serious purpose Ballet as an art is studied by the representatives of the best school. Glazounov's *Cleopatra*, a *mimodrame* in one act ; *Les Sylphides*, a *reverie romantique*, the music by Chopin ; Schumann's exquisitely whimsical *Le Carnaval*, made into a pantomime ballet in one act ; *Le Dieu Bleu* by that interesting and *revereuse* composer, Reynaldo Hahn ; these are among the productions which, ranging over classic, poetic and romantic subjects, would veritably have appealed to such artists of the Ballet as Rameau, Noverre, Gardel and Blasis, not to mention other *maîtres* of more recent times. And what dancers there were to interpret them ! M. Nijinsky, the finest male dancer of this century ; Mme Karsavina, Mlles Sophie Fedorova, Astafieva and Ludmiller Schollar, were among the *danseuses* who had been seen in London previously, and were each in their degree remarkable not only as dancers but as brilliant mimes. There was not one among the extensive and interesting cast who was not of Russia's best, the best, that is, that can come from the school where the traditional art of Ballet was understood to be not the result of merely the study of dancing, but of a study also of all that is best in the tradition of art and music and literature, from all of which the art of Ballet draws—or should draw—its inspiration.

Yet again, one must pay tribute to the Russian artists for their masterly sense of stage effect, and for that supreme sense of what Ballet should be, namely, a harmony of the arts. One has but to contrast three such productions as *Les Sylphides*, *Cleopatra* and Schumann's *Carnaval*, to see a revelation of stage artistry which put to shame the conventionality which, save in rare instances, had characterised the London stage so long.

In *Les Sylphides* we had the very essence of that spirit of romanticism in which cultured Europe was revelling during the 'twenties and the 'thirties of last century, a spirit which found expression in depicting the wildness and grandeur of mountain scenery, in the cloud-like fantasies of Shelley, in the poignant intensity of Byronic passion, and the romantic glamour of Spanish and German legend.

In *Cleopatra* we had a glimpse of the pride and passion of an imperious queen, ruling over a nation whose own passions were but subdued by tyranny, in a land where earth itself seemed satiated with the fructifying influence of water and a burning sun. From the first moment to the last the stage was in a glow, as a red thread of tragedy deepened to a climax of despair.

What a change to turn from such a production to the whimsies, romance and fantasy of such a thing as Schumann's *Carnaval*! Here was the obverse of the romanticism of *Les Sylphides*; the undercurrent of poetic irony so characteristic of Schumann's own music in its lighter moods. Here again one found a masterly idea in the audacious simplicity of the stage setting. To see the great stage of Covent Garden decorated with long curtains and two sofas of the early Victorian pattern—stiff, prim, unyielding, covered with striped repp—was a thing to take one's breath away, until, as the music began, little figure after little figure slipped, like figures in a dream, between the curtains : Pierrot, Pierrette, Harlequin—little men and women of the eighteen-thirties mingling with these characters of the *Commedia dell'Arte* to make a series of pictures of wooings and repulses, of meetings and partings, of provocations and denials, revealing the eternal comedy of life, seen as it were in a glass, *not* "darkly," but far off, mistily ; all eminently unreal, yet in some other world far, far away, in some mysterious land of dreams, one felt such things perchance might really be.

*Le Sacre du Printemps* was an ingenious attempt at primitivism, but, while disliking the vagueness of its *décor*, one could not but admire so audacious an

endeavour to break wholly with tradition ; and it was well contrasted by the virility, fantastic, mocking humour and the scenic splendour of Michel Fokine's *Le Coq d'or* ; and still more by the beauty of Leon Bakst and Tcherepinin's *Narcisse*, and the poetic charm of *Le Spectre de la Rose*, superbly danced by Nijinsky and Mme Karsavina.

These, however, are but brief impressions of pleasures shared by many others who may have been differently impressed. We have had many books and articles on the Russian Ballet, and it is not my purpose to deal more fully with history so recent that most readers can as readily give account thereof. But when all is said, the significant fact remaining is—that, at this period of the history of an art some two thousand years old, we find most recently in popular favour, not English Ballet as it was in the sixteenth century days of the English Masque ; not French, as it was in the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries ; not Italian, as it was in the 'forties of last century ; nor English as we had seen it at its best at the Empire and Alhambra in the first quarter of this century ; but Russian Ballet, a balanced harmony of the four associated arts of Dance, Mime, Music and Décor, which the Russians have only been able to achieve in their perfection—quite apart from ideas or ideals expressed—by *sheer technical efficiency* in *all* the arts of which Ballet is composed. That, perhaps, is the one thing that Russian Ballet has shown us which is of the greatest value and significance for any lovers of the art in any capital of the world.

## CHAPTER XXXI

### THE PAGEANT OF RECENT YEARS

**G**LANCING over our chronicle of former days and noting what was said by contemporary critics of the more brilliant periods of Ballet, one wonders what memories the present generation will retain of the art as seen in London during recent years, and what significance any criticism of our day will have for those who may chance to read it, say, half a century hence.

Whether as memories of the living, or as the study of some future historian of the Dance, there should be one point on which, perhaps, both present and future generations could agree, and that is, in considering these post-War years to have been of unusual interest as representing a period of artistic courage and experiment, apart from the outstanding work of the more outstanding stars.

A general survey emphasises the fact that one of the most potent modern influences on the art of Ballet has been that which really evolved during the first decade of this century, namely, the work of the Russians, of which Mme Pavlova was the pioneer when she came with her own company to make her London *début* in 1910.

It is not necessary to discuss in detail here the origin and history of the Imperial Russian Ballet in which she was trained and from which she broke away, as did those who followed her. The subject has already been fully dealt with by abler pens than mine, notably those of M. Valerien Svetlov, M. Nicolas Legat, M. Michel Fokine, M. André Levinson, and, of course, by M. Victor Dandré in his very beautiful monograph on his wife, the late Mme Anna Pavlova ; and by M. Arnold L. Haskell in his critical survey, *Balletomania*. What concerns us most in a brief review of the general evolution of Ballet—mainly as seen in London—is the artistic and practical significance which the work of the Russians has for English students of the Dance and Ballet, or for any

interested in the possible future of both arts in this country.

Certainly, those who have seen the performances, respectively, of Mme Pavlova, of the Diaghileff Ballet, and, more recently, of the *Ballets Russes de Monte Carlo*, are possessed of many happy memories, and of a high standard of performance by which to measure the work of others. And what a wonderful pageant of Dance and Ballet, Russian and otherwise, London has, during the past twenty years or so, been able to enjoy !

Who, so blessed as to have seen her, could ever forget the poetic, radiant personality of Anna Pavlova, whose every appearance won the enthusiastic admiration and loyal affection of her audience wherever she travelled, as she had travelled, all over the world. The ballets in which she appeared, sometimes conventional, sometimes mere *divertissements*, may not always have equalled the best examples of the ballet-composer's art, but she and her admirable company were a revelation of the heights to which, in sheer technical efficiency and poetic idealism, the art of Ballet had attained under the traditions of the great Imperial School of Russia, a " school " owing much in its origins to Italy and France ; and she herself was the personification of all that was finest in those traditions.

With her universally regretted death there passed away one who was indeed one of the greatest artists in the history of the Dance, worthy to range with a Sallé or a Taglioni, whom she resembled only in her idealism and in her triumphs.

Russian dancers were not unknown to London before Pavlova opened her first season at the Palace Theatre in April, 1910. The statuesque and graceful Lydia Kyasht had been welcomed at the Empire, as had also the somewhat coldly classic Catrina Gelzer at the Alhambra. But when Pavlova, with her expressive, luminous eyes and vivid personality, came to take her final call on the opening night of that season in 1910, and the crescendo of applause which had greeted her every dance, broke into a climax of thunderous cheers, one knew that



Photo - Debenham

ALICIA MARKOVA AND ANTON DOLIN

Two of the finest operatic dancers of to-day, here seen in *Giselle*.



*Photo - Pearl Freeman*

M. LEONIDE MASSINE

A brilliant dancer choreographer, creator of *Les Présages* and *Chorégum*, etc.

London audiences had taken to their hearts for good one of the most exquisite dancers, one of the loveliest and most *spirituelle* personalities the stage has ever seen.

Of Polish origin, but born in St. Petersburg, Anna, as a child of eight, was taken by her widowed mother to the Marynsky Theatre, where she saw a performance of Tschaikovsky's ballet, *The Sleeping Beauty*, and promptly announced her determination to become a great dancer and to appear in that same ballet in that same theatre. It was an ambition which, after the severe routine of the Imperial Ballet training from the age of ten to the age of sixteen, she triumphantly achieved.

Although Pavlova had actually danced in London at a private party, given in honour of the late King Edward and Queen Alexandra in 1908, it was from her brilliant reception at the Palace Theatre two years later that her fame may be dated, and from that moment it steadily increased. Her performance on that occasion with Mordkin, of a dance to Rubinstein's "Valse Caprice," and their famous *Automne Bacchanale* to the music of Glazounov, had an electric effect on all who saw them. Never had such consummate ease of movement, such rhythmic swing and ecstasy, such assured poetic grace been seen before ; and the success of that first season here was repeated the following year, and, as regards Pavlova herself, in every year after, either in London or in the leading cities of Europe, America and the East, in the course of successive world tours with her own company.

Pavlova's last London appearance was in December, 1930, when, with her company, she had a week's season at the Golders Green Hippodrome, where her programme included *Autumn Leaves*, an exquisite ballet of her own to Chopin's music ; Clustine's gipsy ballet, *Amarilla*, in which she played the title-*rôle*, with sure dramatic instinct ; and also her famous and beautiful *Dying Swan* dance, arranged by Fokine to Saint-Saëns' music ; and always she danced with that same ineffable *souplesse* of movement and sheer poetic inspiration that she had displayed on her London *début* twenty

years before ; nor was the enthusiasm of her audience any less.

Throughout those twenty years she had been passing from triumph to triumph through the cities of the world ; had kept a company together, loyal to her sway ; had kept the flame of her art alight, unwavering ; and on her way had, as but few knew, lavishly aided with her toil-won wealth many a suffering compatriot through the medium of unparaded charities ; and when she died it was not only a great dancer, a great artist, who passed from among us, but a great-hearted woman, one who throughout her life had not spared herself in the service of her art, or of her fellow-beings.

Following on Mme Pavlova's London *début* at the Palace Theatre came, in the following year, 1911, the first appearance of the Russian Ballet company under the direction of the late M. Serge de Diaghileff at Covent Garden.

Diaghileff represented a revolt from the older tradition as established at the Imperial School of Russia, and had formed his company with artists yet trained by that school to the highest degree of technical efficiency, but, like himself, imbued with a new artistic spirit, largely, one believes, due to the influence of Isadora Duncan's idealism on choreographers, dancers, musicians, and other ambitious young artists of the Russian Ballet of some thirty years ago.

Despite the apparent novelty of their work, it must not be forgotten that its technical basis was rooted in the remoter past, reaching back through the classic influence of Enrico Cecchetti in the twentieth, and of Petipa and Johanssen in the nineteenth centuries, to Didelot, Noverre and other French *maitres* of the eighteenth century. But though the basis was of the traditional Italian and French technique as regards the dance itself, how different in spirit from anything seen before was the resultant art of Ballet as seen through the Russian temperament ! Was it not Zola who described a work of art as : “ *Un coin de nature, vu à travers un tempérament ?* ” And whatsoever the temperament, it is

not only Nature, or human nature, but national character that expresses itself through any work of art, and in no art more sensitively than in that of Ballet.

To the brilliance and charm of those pre-War productions of the Russian Ballet, tribute has been paid in an earlier chapter, and little more need be said now. In its later, post-War phases, the Diaghileff Ballet came in for criticism in various quarters, as tending to the merely trivial, and it certainly seemed at times to depart from that coherence of idea and form which had characterised the work of the company on its earlier appearances. But, whatsoever else could be said of it, two points in its favour remain for all time, namely, that it was not, as Ballet had so often seemed before, "conventional"; and that as to *technique*, it was much in advance of anything we had seen before, and by "technique," of course, I do not mean that of the Dance alone, but from the point of view of the production of a ballet as a whole, as an artistic form different in kind from that of other forms of dramatic representation. Here, then, we have perhaps one of the chief lessons the Russian invasion of this century can give to students of Dance of Ballet in this country.

Possibly we should not be far wrong in considering that it was really the Russians who first taught the average Londoner that Ballet is, or can be, an "art" at all. Before they came we had certainly seen many a good and artistic ballet in London; but most people looked on "the Ballet" mainly as one of our slighter forms of entertainment, and they went to the Alhambra, Empire, or even to the Opera, in a more or less uncritical mood, albeit much of the work they saw was of sound artistic tradition and there were severe critics of Ballet then as now. To-day, on the other hand, we have a vast public well educated in the study of the Dance and of Ballet. They have some idea of the work involved in the practice of these arts; some appreciation of their history, significance and possibilities; and, while some may—and the younger generation *does*—expect that the work they see shall prove original, or "amusing,"

enough at least to entertain them, they also demand that, as to the *technique* of the four-fold arts employed in the composition of a ballet, the resultant *ensemble* shall satisfy the critical standards of a taste now educated in these matters. This the Russians have given us, even as the old Greeks, with their instinct for beauty, truth and sanity, left to the world an imperishable legacy of classic standards by which to judge not only art, but possibly our philosophy of Life itself.

Now mere novelty in art is not all, nor, though it may seem heresy to say so, is technical supremacy everything ; otherwise would the letter of the law be more than its spirit, which is not so. And, in all matters of Art, this process of conceiving Beauty, and, by its expression, giving joy to the world, demands that " *technique* " must be mastered, and *subordinated* to the creative process of the artist mind, whether composing a ballet, a musical symphony, painting a picture, or writing a play ; for it is only in this co-ordination of technical facilities with the material at hand by means of the creative spirit, that the resultant work can count at all as an influence upon the beauty or joy of Life.

The Russians at their best, indubitably taught us that while each element in the composition of Ballet has its technical background and value, all must be considered by the composer as so many plastic materials of which to make a resultant work of art, and one that shall influence not only the sight and hearing, but the minds, hearts and memories of its beholders. In the work of the Russians at its best one saw this over and over again ; the *ensemble* was perfect because the technical work which had gone to the making of its elements had been perfected first ; and because all were subordinated to the expressive purpose of the master mind of its director, quite apart from any question as to whether what he had to say was worth the saying.

Nothing more to the point has been better said than by that fine dancer, Mr. Anton Dolin, in an interview published in *The Era* a year or so ago, in the course of which he remarked : " Diaghileff's Ballet was a wonderful

unit. It was not merely a company of a few outstanding stars and their supporters, but a collective thing. It contained very great artists, of course, but the whole company was so cleverly blended together that no one individual ever outbalanced the effect of the whole."

If, in the later phase of the Russian Ballet, some of the productions seemed comparatively trivial in character, it was due to no weakness of technical excellence in the various elements, but of the creative spirit behind them, of the theme or ideas expressed.

As Mr. Adrian Stokes remarked in an article published in *The Week-End Review* for April, 1933 : "Diaghileff's first period was obviously the impetus which carried him through his later developments. The first period was the least far-fetched, the period of *Scheherazade*, *Sylphides*, *Carnaval*, *Fire Bird*, *Petroushka*. Fokine was the genius of the period and these are his ballets. Diaghileff outgrew Fokine, but I venture to doubt whether anyone else has. The initial development from the traditional ballet was the result of Fokine's choreography. His work was the most perfect and lasting Diaghileff produced—that is to say, it was a creativeness dictated by wider considerations than those governing later ballets. It was a revolution so successful that it seems to us now to have been over-ripe. We must go back to Fokine both to counteract the later Diaghileff influence out of which we can create little, and still more in order to strengthen our very weak link with the tradition of ballet as a whole."

That seems to me a not unsympathetic criticism of later developments, and one that calls for serious consideration by all who may have any interest in the future of Ballet in this or any other country, for there was never greater need for an art, essentially of long tradition, to keep touch with that tradition, whatsoever may be attempted in the direction of experiment.

In other words, while it may be necessary to the vitality of an art that there should be a periodical revision of its inherited traditions, and though it may be called a

“revolt,” it is self-evident that no art can live on revolt alone, any more than can any social order. It is, indeed, characteristic of revolution that it cannot last, because it bears inevitably within itself the seeds of division.

Only as long as there is unity of purpose can revolutions succeed, or endure ; and that is why they invariably degenerate from their initiatory aims, and why the very spirit of revolt is ultimately inimical to the Arts ; for there can be no progress in any art without unity of purpose, with freedom to exist, and to evolve, in peace. This is particularly the need of Ballet, which, being the result of corporate effort, demands especially a creative and co-ordinating unity of purpose, *and* of control, with suitable and *stable* conditions for progress.

The earlier phase of the Russian Ballet represented a revolt from tradition and was temporarily successful, but to break from the past does not necessarily annul it ; the Past is always with us. A novel achievement may appeal for a time as being simply different from that of the past, but yet not be better than the best that tradition has given us ; and if, in its later phase, the Diaghileff Ballet at times lacked unity of purpose and dignity of theme, it would seem merely to have followed the course of most revolutions in being inspired by the presumption that novelty *must* be good, just because it differs from the work of the past.

In that spirit lies failure, at any rate in Art, for it is the gambler’s spirit, the spirit of recklessness, not of Art, which is always that of a creative and constructive mind directing the manipulation of material towards an end foreseen ; and though high praise must always be due to the Diaghileff Ballet for the best work of its better years, one can only feel glad that while there has in England been much of interesting experiment in the art of Ballet, there has at the same time been a consistent regard for, and study of, the great traditions of the past.

Above all, it is reassuring to note that English choreographers and dancers have realised that experiment does not necessarily involve slavish imitation of the

foreigner, and that they have, in effect, discovered themselves : and how courageous and successful much of their experiment has been !

In these past ten years of economic depression courage has indeed been required of all who would pursue an art so dependent for support on public prosperity. And if all the work of the various experimentalists has not always equalled that of the earlier Russian Ballet, and if all their ventures may not have met with the financial success such courage certainly deserved, much work of striking originality and beauty *has* been achieved, and that in a period of economic depression unprecedented in history.

When we recall simply the variety of work seen at the successive " Sunshine " matinées, first instituted in 1919, by Mr. P. J. S. Richardson, who has done so much for the dancing profession in many ways ; when we recall the productions of the Association of Operatic Dancing of Great Britain (founded in 1920) ; of the Rambert Ballet in 1930 at the Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith, and elsewhere since ; of the Camargo Society (founded by Mr. P. J. S. Richardson and Mr. Arnold Haskell in 1930) at the Apollo, and other theatres ; of the Ballet Club at their little theatre in Notting Hill ; of the splendid work of the Vic-Wells Ballet under the brilliant direction of Miss Ninette de Valois ; when, too, we recall the very original work presented by the Ginner-Mawer Company since 1918 in many programmes at Stratford-on-Avon, and at West End theatres ; and of the Association of Teachers of the Revived Greek Dance (founded in 1923), culminating in their great massed performance by five hundred dancers in Hyde Park in 1933 ; and again the fine work of the Rambert Ballet at the Duke of York's ; one is amazed at the variety and richness of imaginative conception, and the high technical standard exhibited in the respective fields, no less than by the courage of all who have engaged in such brave adventures during these troublous latter years. Moreover, one of the most cheering aspects of recent Dance history has been the fact that *all* these various, and for the most part artistically

successful, productions were the achievement mainly of native talent and co-operation, *not* foreign.

To the historian of the Dance and Ballet what is of even more special interest than the work seen at individual performances, howsoever good, is the significance of the general trend of events ; and certainly the trend during the past twenty, still more during the past ten years has been towards proving that there is now in this country an extraordinary vitality in the arts of the Dance and Ballet, as well as personal enterprise, a host of English dancers available for production, and a higher standard of dance *technique* in all *genres*, than have ever existed in this country before.

That this is so is very largely due to the great work of the Operatic Association under the Presidency of Mme Adeline Genée and her Council of leading teachers of to-day, for it was founded by her with the special view of preserving the great dance traditions of the past, and of ensuring a high standard of *technique* for the future both as to teachers and students of operatic dancing.

The success of her work was made particularly evident in a matinée given by the Operatic Association at the Gaiety Theatre in 1929, when, as an honoured guest, Mlle Lucienne Lamballe, of the Paris Opera, appeared in a *Divertissement Classique* arranged by Mr. Edouard Espinosa, and was supported by an excellent *corps de ballet* of some forty English dancers. The programme also included an excellent performance of a scene from Délibes' *Coppélia*, produced by M. Alexander Genée, with Miss Phyllis Bedells as a delightful "Swanilda," M. Felix Demery as the "Franz," and a number of other well-known English dancers in the cast. Yet another very enjoyable item was a minuet, arranged by Mme Genée herself, and beautifully danced by students of the Association. Particularly fascinating was the contribution of Mr. Anton Dolin, who gave a brilliant interpretation of Albeniz' *Espagnol* ; yet another was *Hommage aux Belles Viennoises*, of which the graceful choreography was by Miss Ninette de Valois, and in which nearly a score of English dancers appeared, as

also in other contributions to a programme too lengthy for fuller consideration here. But, beyond the charm of individual performances, what was particularly pleasing was the high standard of *technique*, both as to the dancing and presentation, points which gave one sure hope as to the future work of the Association ; and its steady progress since then has seen that hope fulfilled in the increasing number of highly trained dancers who have passed the examinations of the Association.

Inevitable space-limits preclude detailed discussion of all the productions of all the various organisations that have been active during recent years, but quite apart from such organisations there have been notable performances which have exerted a definite influence on dance history, and among recurring events that have given me some of my most interesting memories, as they have presumably other devotees of the Dance, have been the annual " Sunshine " *Matinées*, one of which, that of 1930, I recall for a special reason, in that it seemed in a particular manner to link the older traditions of the Dance with the work of experimentalists in newer fields.

These " Sunshine " *Matinées* have always been especially valuable in bringing together varied elements, and on this particular occasion we found in the same programme the work of such finished upholders of the operatic traditions as Mme Karsavina, Mr. Anton Dolin and Miss Ninette de Valois, along with that of noted exponents of what has been known as the " Central European " school.

The contrast offered an instructive example of the manner in which the individual personality and the national character and influence of a particular *technique* reveal themselves through the medium of the Dance. Here, in the exquisite performance of Fokine's *Spectre de la Rose* by Mme Karsavina and Mr. Harold Turner, one saw not only an example of perfect *technique* in the true operatic tradition, but mind and heart were enchanted by the poetic beauty of the interpretation, by the gracious serenity of the performance as a

whole. By contrast one received from the work of the Central European School the impression that the *technique* had evolved from a tense physical and psychological basis, and there was a fantastic unreality, or unnaturalness, in the resultant performance, clever as it undoubtedly was in its own particular and, to me, seemingly morbid, *genre*. Great as is, or was, the vogue of the Germanic School of Dance in Germany, one felt that it was best confined to that spiritual home where it would be likely to find its more naturally appreciative devotees than in English-speaking or Latin countries, where the traditions of a classic *norm*, and a sense of humour, are still maintained.

It was a relief again to contrast the no less original and charming modern note of a humorous little ballet, *The Picnic*. Here, to Vaughan Williams' fascinating music, we had a ballet original in conception, clear-cut and sound in its choreography (by Mlle Ninette de Valois) and danced with purity of *technique*, joyous *verve* and sense of classic style by a well-balanced and brilliant cast, headed by Mr. Hedley Briggs, Miss Ursula Moreton, Miss Iris James and Mr. Stanley Judson ; and a special word of appreciation is due to Mr. Hedley Briggs for the originality, freshness and charm of his designs for the costumes and *décor*. Such a production was proof enough that English dancers and producers have no need to bend the knee to foreign art ; and it was no wonder that the ballet was applauded with the utmost enthusiasm. Equally well received also were the *soli* contributed by Mr. Anton Dolin, whose *Hymn to the Sun* was a fine example of classic operatic work, and by Mlle Ninette de Valois, who, in her peacock-dance, *Pride*, gave us, in perfection of *technique* and poetic grace, one of the most original and exquisite dance performances seen on the London stage in twenty years.

Yet again in the same programme we had proof that it is possible to find highly trained dancers and also choreographers and musicians able in all respects to meet the requirements of a national ballet, as evidenced by the work of those under the direction of Mme Ram-

bert in their delightful performance of the late Peter Warlock's *Capriol Suite*. This, based on old French airs, the choreography ingeniously modernised by Mr. Frederick Ashton, gave us once more an opportunity of enjoying the charm of the old-world dances, and it was a joy to see English dancers give a performance that so truly caught the essential spirit of the *Basse-Danse*, *Tordion*, *Mattachins* and *Bransle*, and of their period as represented by Arbeau's "Orchésographie" of three centuries ago.

Yet again, in January, 1931, we were to see the Marie Rambert Ballet in their season at the Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith, where, headed by two original members of the pre-war Russian Ballet, Mme Karsavina and M. Leon Woizikowski, an excellent company were to present, among other good things, Fokine's dramatisation—or perhaps one should say *balletisation*—of Schumann's *Carnaval*, as well as Fokine's *Les Sylphides*, both admirably done. In the latter, Mme Karsavina's *Valse*, Miss Prudence Hyman's and Mr. Frederick Ashton's *Mazurkas* and Miss Pearl Argyle's *Prelude*, as well as the *ensemble* dances, presented examples of some of the most poetic and technically soundest work ever seen on the London stage; and it was no wonder that both these Fokine ballets were, on the occasion that I saw them, received by the audience with terrific applause. Other gems of a most interesting programme were the *Florentine Picture*, arranged by Mr. Frederick Ashton, in which Mme Rambert represented the Madonna, in a setting that brought to mind the spirit of the earlier Florentine artists, a performance of rare grace and dignity; and to this a striking contrast was presented in the *Sporting Sketches*, wittily arranged by Miss Susan Salaman, and by another amusing item, Miss Diana Gould's subtly ironic and exquisitely performed *Mannequin Dance*, to mention but a few outstanding points in a very enjoyable programme.

Within a month dance-lovers were to enjoy a production by the Camargo Society at the Apollo Theatre of Miss Ninette de Valois' *Cephalus and Procris*, a stylised

ballet on a classic theme to music by Gretry, a fine eighteenth-century composer far too long neglected ; and also, to music by Arthur Bliss, an amusing *dvertisement*, *Rout*, of which the ingenious choreography was also by Miss de Valois ; and the programme concluded with *Straussiana*, arranged and produced by that experienced *maître*, M. Nicolas Legat, in which particularly fine work was done by Miss Phyllis Bedells and Mr. Rupert Doone ; and we must also pay tribute to the subsequent production of Miss de Valois' ballet *Job* which, inspired by Blake's illustrations, proved one of the most strikingly original works the London stage has seen.

Of subsequent performance the most triumphant, of course, was in June, 1933, when the Society gave, in honour of the Delegates to the Economic Conference, a Gala Performance at Covent Garden, which was honoured by the presence of H.M. the Queen, the Duke and Duchess of York, and one of the most distinguished audiences that had ever crowded the historic Opera House. The programme was well within traditional lines, and included two acts of Délibes' evergreen *Coppélia*, with Mme Lydia Lopokova as a delightful "Swanilda" ; Tschaikowsky's *Lac des Cygnes*, with that superb dancer Miss Alicia Markova as the Swan Princess ; while among the other particular stars of a brilliant evening were Mr. Anton Dolin, Miss Ninette de Valois, Mr. Hedley Briggs, Mr. Frederick Ashton, Miss Ursula Moreton and Mr. Stanley Judson, as well as a fine *corps de ballet* derived from the Vic-Wells Company, their *mazurka* in *Coppélia* being particularly applauded ; and with Mr. Constant Lambert as conductor of an orchestra drawn from the London Philharmonic and the London Symphony Orchestras. It was, indeed, an historic occasion in the chronicles of the Dance and Ballet.

To the work, too, of the Ballet Club, founded in 1931, tribute should be paid, though it is hardly necessary to discuss the several productions in detail since they have been, in a sense, rather an extension of the initiatory

impulse of the Rambert Ballet ; but it is pleasant to chronicle the success of the Club, and especially to note the cordial reception given to their production, in October, 1933, of *Our Lady's Juggler*, a version, provided by Susan Salaman and Andrée Howard, of the well-known mediæval legend ; and the success, too, of Anthony Tudor's *Lysistrata*.

Again, in addition to the work of the foregoing organisations of home origin, we have seen new developments of unusual technical interest in the revival of the Hellenic ideal in the arts of Dance and Mime, as shown in the productions of the Ginner-Mawer Company at various West End theatres, notably Miss Ruby Ginner's impressive ballets, *Armies of the Earth and Air*, *Mount Lycaeus*, *The Corn Harvest*, and others of striking originality in artistic conception and choreography. Miss Ginner's keen research into the *technique* of the old Greek Dance has been expressively supplemented by Miss Irene Mawer's revival of the art of Mime, as seen in her brilliant production of that mimetic classic, *L'Enfant Prodigue*, in which, as Pierrot, she proved herself a mime of rare poetic sensitiveness and sound *technique*, as also in her work as an original mimo-dramatist, exemplified in her dramatic *Santa Caterina*, *The White Fool*, *Timothy and the Blue Mantle*, *Pierrots at Versailles*, and, among her *soli*, the exquisite *Aunt Anne*, humorous sketches such as *Arlequine*, *The Perruquier*, the witty *Pierrot Poète*, and others, all marked by creative originality, poetic beauty or whimsical charm.

Beside the work of our own national artists we have had interesting examples of imported foreign art in the productions of the "Ballet Joos," a German company, at the Savoy, whose *Green Table* evoked great admiration for its originality and dramatic power ; we have had visits from that very distinguished Russian artist from Paris, Mme Ida Rubinstein ; from the brilliant Spanish dancer, La Argentina ; and from M. de Basil's excellent *Ballets Russes de Monte Carlo*, who came to the old Alhambra in July, 1933, for a season of three weeks and remained for four brilliantly successful months,

their productions for the most part being rather in line with the later Russian work, but notable more particularly for the symbolic power and originality of Massine's *Presages*.

It is time, however, to turn from discussion of particular performances, for though such as have been mentioned were certainly notable in their day, what for the historian of longer views is of more significance than that of the applause they deservedly won is that, underlying the stream of individual productions, there runs ever a deeper tide of more enduring effort, namely, the constructive work of those behind the scenes, influencing that of the rising generation and of the future, work which helped to make such productions possible and to ensure continuity with the great traditions of the past ; and it is time to consider briefly the respective activities of the various organisations working towards that end.

## CHAPTER XXXII

### *FINALE, AND—THE FUTURE*

TAKING a broad survey of the whole history of the Dance and Ballet, and more particularly of its progress during the present century in this country, the most definitely constructive and hopeful work—apart from questions of actual theatrical production—seems to me to have been, and to be, that of four influential organisations, namely, the Association of Operatic Dancing of Great Britain ; the Association of Teachers of the Revived Greek Dance ; the Imperial Society, with which is incorporated the Cecchetti Society ; and, lastly, the English Folk Dance Society.

Dancing as a profession is now better organised than ever before ; and as an art, one of the oldest in the world, it may be broadly classified under one or other of four divisions—the Operatic, Greek, Folk, and Ballroom Dancing, though one should perhaps add other types best defined by the general term “stage dancing,” not especially represented, as in these cases, by any particular organisation.

No classification can ever be quite rigid, but anyone who has studied dance history closely will recall the fact that these four divisions have at times more or less blended with each other, many a dance of “folk” origin, for instance, having become modified by teachers and so found its way into Court and social life, and also on to the stage. The old minuet, for example, derived from a peasant dance of Poitou, became the rage of eighteenth-century Parisian society ; and many another dance of more recent times, such as the valse, polka, tango and others, have had a similarly humble origin and eventually found their way into the ballroom and to the stage.

This fourfold classification practically covers the main divisions of dancing as seen to-day, and all four are now represented by definite organisations of artists, which are exerting far-reaching influence on dancing, both as an art and as a profession.

First in importance must be placed the Association of Operatic Dancing of Great Britain, which now has for Patroness H.M. the Queen ; and, for President, Mme Adeline Genée, who is supported by an influential Grand Council.

Apart from other considerations, the A.O.D. should come first because it represents a Royal and Operatic tradition of over 250 years, namely, the *technique* of pure ballet-dancing which, based on the essential "five positions," had existed long before, but only became important to the stage when Louis XIV of France established his famous Royal Academy of Dancing for the purpose of ensuring a supply of properly trained dancers for his own Court ballets at Versailles, and for the Paris Opera. Indeed, one is reminded that the term "operatic" dancing, which is sometimes a puzzle to young dancers, is due to the fact that the ballets of those days were really "opera ballets" in which the dances were quite as important as the singing. From that time the word "operatic" has rightly been used in this country as a dignified word for what has been, abroad, more familiarly termed "ballet dancing."

The Association of Operatic Dancing was established in 1920 to guarantee that a great tradition should not be lost, and that a high standard of *technique* should be sustained by all professed teachers or exponents of the operatic school, as well as to train the younger generation in the "track" they should follow. For this reason, special classes and examinations are frequently held, at which members of the Council officiate as judges ; and it may further be added that the Association is already exerting, through its periodical examinations and the work of its members, considerable influence on the future of dancing not only in Great Britain, but also in the Dominions.

What is too often loosely spoken of as "classic" dancing, but should rather be termed Hellenic, or Greek, Dance, owed its primary inspiration mainly to the pioneer efforts of Isadora Duncan some thirty years ago. But the Greek Dance as known to-day is a rather



MISS NINETTE DE VALOIS  
grapher, dancer, and ballet-mistress of the Vic-Wells Ballet,  
in her dance creation, "Pride."



Photo Debenham

"LILAS SYLPHIDES"

A W. Wells production of this famous ballet—Stanley Hudson and Beatrice Appleyard are in the centre, with Ursula Moreton in the foreground. The photograph was taken on the stage, but unfortunately before one of the "trees"

different thing, owes no allegiance to the Duncan methods, and is due to the original and patient research of Miss Ruby Ginner, whose work has won increasing respect during the past dozen years or so for its invariable dignity and idealism of character. The Greek Dance now has a well-grounded *technique*, and is one of the most expressive and beautiful forms of dancing to be seen, the artistic prestige and educational value of which are safeguarded by the Association of Teachers of the Revived Greek Dance.

Here it may perhaps be well to correct a false assumption sometimes met with to-day—as it was in the eighteenth century—namely, that there must be an essential antagonism between two different types of dance or dancer ; that as there is an essential difference, for instance, between the technique of the Operatic and the Greek Dance, so there must inevitably be antagonism between dancers of the one “ school ” and of the other. One might as well suppose there must be antagonism between painters in oils and painters in water-colours ; between etchers and engravers. Controversy has raged over similar differences in the fields of art, music and literature in centuries past, but such controversy leads nowhere and is rather petty, for, in the infinite realm of Beauty, there is room for every form thereof. Between the Operatic and the Greek Dance there is, of course, a basic difference in *technique* ; but it is a difference that should first be realised, and then accepted, not as matter for antagonism but merely as offering different *media* for the expression of artistic ideas.

In proof, if need be, that there is, in fact, no such antagonism between exponents of the Operatic Dance and the Greek, it may be noted that there has long existed a working arrangement between their two respective organisations by which the Operatic Association not only holds examinations in the Operatic *technique*, but also Children’s Examinations in the Greek Dance. Such co-operation indicates a sympathetic understanding of technical differences, and also a real appreciation of artistic aims ; and such a spirit augurs

well for the closer co-operation of all branches of the dancing profession in the future. After all, one must indeed be limited in mind and sympathy who cannot see beauty in the work of any other "school" than one's own ; and, at any rate, it is worth noting that there was no such narrowness about that great artist, Anna Pavlova, who followed with the keen and affectionate interest of a close personal friend, the progress of Miss Ginner's work, even as she, in turn, had the deepest admiration of Pavlova's consummate artistry as a dancer of the Operatic school.

It is interesting to observe *en passant* that as a girl Miss Ruby Ginner had gone through the usual training for Operatic Ballet. Finding it, however, incompatible with the artistic ideas she wished to express, and, equally, finding that the basis of the Duncan methods could satisfy neither her requirements as a highly trained dancer, nor as a serious student of Classic art and history, she entered on a close study of Hellenic statuary and vase paintings, and, in her valuable manual on *The Revived Greek Dance, its Art and Technique*, she has told us how : "Research in the literature, sculpture and ceramic arts of ancient Greece induced certain conclusions on the ideal of physical education in Hellenic times ; personal experiment proved these conclusions to be capable of producing a type of movement similar to that portrayed on vases and in marbles."

Yet another difference to be noted between the Operatic and the Greek Dance is in their aims ; for, while the main objective of a student of the former is to appear on the stage, Ballet being essentially an art of the Theatre, and the whole training tending toward that end ; on the other hand, though the Greek Dance may perfectly well be utilised by a composer of Ballet, according to his requirements, for theatrical purposes (apart from the staging of an entire Greek ballet, or a classic scene), it has an essentially educational importance, since it induces health-giving co-ordination of mind and body, and demands a certain standard of artistic culture for its study and appreciation. Indeed,

so much is its value now realised as a medium of physical and mental culture that it is being increasingly taken up by leading girls' schools and colleges throughout the country, as well as in the Dominions ; and it is largely on the educational side, especially in association with the art of Mime—now represented by the Institute of Mime—that further developments may be expected.

Yet another influential dance organisation of to-day is that of the Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing, with which has also been incorporated, since 1925, the Cecchetti Society, originally founded to uphold the Italian tradition in Operatic work as represented by the late Cavaliere Enrico Cecchetti. The Imperial Society has for its President Major Cecil H. Taylor, and is divided into various branches : the Operatic, which is subdivided into two sections, namely, the Operatic (A.O.D. Method) Section and the Cecchetti Section ; then there are a General Branch ; two Greek Branches ; as well as a Ballroom Branch and a Stage Branch ; so that practically every phase of the Dance to-day is covered by the Society's activities. And, as in the case of the Operatic Association and the Greek Dance Association, the Imperial Society holds periodical Conferences and Examinations in connection with its various branches.

As regards the dancing profession, some may feel inclined to question the advisability of such a multiplicity of examinations, and one knows how great a question this has become in purely educational circles ; but a dance student is, after all, not obliged to take every examination, but only those requisite for the type of dance in which she wishes to specialise as a teacher, and for which an examination does at least ensure a real standard of efficiency, so that it is her own fault if she engages on heavier tasks than she can adequately master.

In addition to these three influential organisations there is yet another, of rather different aims, whose duty it is to conserve those genuine traditional Old English

Folk and Country Dances, many of which had continued to exist from Shakespeare's time or earlier, but had been overlooked until rediscovered by the late Mr. Cecil Sharp, who, touring the country in search of Folk Music, gathered up this all but lost treasure of some hundreds of purely native English dances. These have become increasingly popular among the younger generation as an inspiriting and joyous pastime, and forms a precious heritage of England's past in the careful keeping of the English Folk Dance Society.

A part from the Operatic Association, the Imperial Society, the A.T.R.G.D., and the E.F.S., there are hundreds of schools in London and the provinces conducted by able teachers, most of whom have qualified themselves to become members of one or more of these leading organisations ; with the consequence that a high standard of *technique* in tuition can now be guaranteed, whatsoever type of dancing a would-be pupil wishes to learn ; and one has to remember that there is practically no type of dance that might not be called into requisition for the purposes of a composer of Ballets, the call being simply dependent on the theme, and the "period," of the particular production.

Anyone who can recall what the status of the dancing profession and conditions of employment were some thirty years ago can testify to the immense advance the profession as a whole has made within that period, alike as to technical resources and organisation, as well as to the greatly enhanced *prestige* the dancer and dance teacher now enjoy, all of which, of course, is largely due to those who undertook the spade-work involved in founding such organisations.

In view of all this extent, and efficiency, of organisation in the dancing profession itself, one may now question, what is the position of England with regard to Ballet in comparison with that of the other arts ? We have the Royal Academy of Music, the Royal College, the Guildhall School, the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art ; the Central School of Speech Training and

Dramatic Art ; and numerous private schools and academies where music and the dramatic arts are taught ; all admirable as far as they go. We have the various Associations, and countless schools in which dancing is taught, and, for the most part, excellently taught. But we have, as yet, no State-aided Opera House, to which, as on the Continent, an Academy for the study of the Dance and Ballet is attached. It seems strange that the richest city in the world should be deficient in these things. It seems even stranger that highly trained English dancers should find it necessary to seek fame—or oblivion—under unpronounceable Russian names, as part of any “Russian” Ballet.

It may be that there is greater vitality in the arts when they are pursued only under the conditions of competitive, private enterprise ; but it is curious that in practically every other country the dramatic arts have been fostered by the State, and that we in this country seem ever to show a greater welcome to foreign singers and dancers than we do to our own. Ballet, like the films, may be, according to the not perhaps disinterested view of *entrepreneurs*, an “International” art ; but since Italy, France, Russia and other countries, all have had, and have, their *national* Ballet, one can only wonder why England should lack an artistic advantage of such influence.

There is, of course, always a great danger that an institution secure in the support it receives from the State may become conventional, but at least it ensures a standard of technical efficiency ; and, if there be a vital spirit in the nation, that spirit will show itself in the work of such an institution. Russia has proved all this.

Given a National Opera House, to which were attached a Royal Academy of Dancing, what might be the future of Ballet in this country ?

The answer depends mainly, one feels, on the extent to which the possibilities of the art of Ballet were realised by those who should lead the artistic expression of the national spirit. The poet, the artist, the musician, the Master of Dance, and the dancers—men and women—

realising the possibilities of the composite art of Ballet, might foreshadow yet others greater than any we have seen ; especially if it were the work of one who was all these things, and could, appropriately, employ *all* the arts of the theatre.

It would seem that, through lack of technical efficiency in one or other of the arts which go to the making of Ballet, that native Ballet itself has not always attained its highest possible level in England. But without that basic technical efficiency in the living material which he manipulates, how can the creator of a ballet express himself ? A standard of *technique* at least should exist ; and, thanks to the work of the various organisations to which I have previously referred, it *does* exist. That given, what might not yet be done with this art, which history shows has always been so plastic in the hands of master artists, so responsive to the artistic or national moods of the people among whom it has been found.

It has the value and significance of painting, together with the vital and impressive effect of drama. It is not the art of depicting reality ; but the art of plastic and pictorial suggestion, giving life and form to poetic ideas.

At the Royal or Ducal Courts of earlier days, a compliment to some visiting monarch or minister was often conveyed by means of a courtly ballet, the story of which dealt, outwardly perhaps, only with the doings of some mythic hero of the classic past. But the art of Ballet always had greater possibilities than courtly compliment, in that it is always a plastic vehicle for the expression of all ideas. Given the standard of efficiency which makes production possible at all, it only becomes a question of what theme—whether complimentary, mythical, poetic, symbolic, patriotic or even religious—shall be treated by this means, rather than by the arts of painting, music, drama, or of literature.

On these two points—the standard of technical efficiency attained by those associated in the production of Ballet ; and on the choice of theme and manner of treatment by the artist mind ultimately responsible for the production—depends the whole future of Ballet :

the spirit of the artist, and his means of expression ; there lies the future.

What should be the *technique* of Ballet, and to what extent should it be influenced by that of the Dance ? To me it seems that the *technique* of the Dance should influence the composer only to the extent that it may prove appropriate to his artistic requirements ; that *any* form of the Dance may be employed, provided that it conforms to the central *motif* of his intended production ; and that, as to the *technique* of Ballet itself, this, howsoever "modern" in spirit, must be at least in line with the best traditions, which, in the end, are only perhaps those which have been enforced by conditions inherent in all stage production at whatsoever period of dramatic history.

To-day the forms of dancing are many, but there are these main divisions : firstly, the traditional Operatic dancing, capable of every *nuance* of expression ; secondly, those forms of rhythmic movement and statuesque poise which represent the ancient Hellenic ideal of the Dance ; thirdly, all those popular types of theatrical "step" dancing, such as "tap," and other types, seen so often in musical comedy and *revues* ; fourthly, the various types of ballroom dancing ; and, lastly, the different forms of purely National and Folk Dance ; any, or all, of which examples of the Protean Art of the Dance are available, and might at any time be called upon by a ballet-composer for the purposes of a particular production.

We have seen on the London stage at various periods not only numberless ballets in which the traditional Operatic dance was paramount, from *Coppélia* to *Giselle*, or the later productions of the Russians ; but we have also seen others in which the dance technique employed was almost wholly "step" dancing, as in *On the Heath* at the old Alhambra, or National, as in *Carmen*. We have now seen more than one artistically successful ballet composed entirely on the lines of the Hellenic revival, where formerly we had seen but hints of such a possibility in the concerted dances by pupils of Isadora

Duncan ; and there have also been modern ballets in which exhibition ballroom dancers were featured.'

In these various divisions of the Dance, and the technical advance in each, lie the chief—and certainly ample—means of artistic expression for any future master of Ballet ; though one feels that in all probability the traditional Operatic dance will, so long as the present standard of *technique* is sustained, always maintain its supremacy for purely theatrical purposes over other forms of the Dance ; for, as history shows, it has at least stood the test of time as a definite and logical medium of artistic expression in the theatre.

As to the master-mind that is to select one or more of these forms of the Dance and combine them with Mime, Music and *Décor* to achieve a ballet that shall be the medium of ideas, worthy to range as a work of art alongside the tried masterpieces of painting, music, drama or literature, it may be questioned if we shall see anything worthier than the past has given us at its best. Some new Noverre, Blasis, Fokine or Massine may yet arise, of course, but until such a one come forth we may be well content with the standard which the Past has managed to achieve.

To that standard this volume is a willing tribute ; a faithful chronicle which may have novelty for some unaware of days before their time ; while for others, whose memory of recent yet receding events grows dim, it may come as a friendly reminder of happy hours spent, by writer and by reader, in contemplating from the auditorium of many a London theatre the eternal pageant of the Dance and Ballet.

# A CHRONOLOGY OF THE DANCE AND BALLET

## ANTIQUE PERIOD

**EGYPT** : (*c. 1500–500*) *B.C.* Dancing formed a part of religious ritual ; employed in private entertainment, but not as a dramatic spectacle, the Egyptians having no public theatre.

**GREECE** : *Aegean Age* (*c. 3500–1200*). In Crete, sports practised were chiefly bull-baiting and wrestling ; Gaia worshipped with ecstatic dances and processional ceremonies, the frenzied dances of her priests giving rise to the legend of the Kuretes, a representation of their dance surviving into later times. In Mykenae, clay seals and metal work found decorated with representations of Sacred Dances round trees ; and of burials accompanied by dances of mourning.

*Heroic Age* (*c. 1200–1000*). Period of Trojan War and of war-dances ; of religious ritual dances of prayer and libations, before the altars of the gods ; as well as of secular or folk dances ; dancing frequently mentioned in Homer.

*The Dorian Age* (*c. 1000–500*). The cult of athletics in association with religion now exerts increasing influence on the life and ideals of the race, and on development of the Dance as an art. In Sparta, the Pyrrhic Dance is developed. The establishment of the four great Panhellenic Festivals, the Olympian Games (776 *B.C.*), the Pythian (582), the Isthmian (582), and the Nemean (573), also exert great influence, as do the various local festivals, in which dance and drama play important part in worship of local deities, notably the Dionysia, Panatheneia, Heræa and the Delian Festivals, etc.

*The Hellenic Age* (*c. 500–340*). After termination of the Persian Wars all the arts receive a new impetus from great religious and patriotic enthusiasm ; and that of the Dance now enters into every phase of the religious and secular life of the people.

*Hellenistic Age* (*c. 340–140*). Period of decline sets in, largely owing to internal warfare, decline of Greek power and in arts ; athletics ruined by professionalism ; moral and physical deterioration of the Dance ; influence of Eastern voluptuousness seen in all art.

**ROME** (*250 B.C.–A.D. 400*). Dancing, partly derived from Greece ; and Mime, mainly indigenous ; both show progressive development in popular favour as a public entertainment, especially the mimetic dance. Among noted dancer-mimes of the earlier period were Livius Andronicus ; Quintus Roscius ; Cleon, who mimed to flute accompaniment ; Nymphidorus, who discarded the traditional stage masks ; and, later, the rival

dancer-mimes, Pylades, Bathyllus and Hylas, famous in the reign of Augustus. Afterwards, with the fall of the Roman Empire, followed the decline of Dance and Mime ; and both arts, except for localised folk-dancing, were only sustained through the Dark Ages by wandering performers, minstrels and *jongleurs*, until the re-birth of the Dance, as of all the arts, with the dawn of the Renaissance.

#### FOURTEENTH AND FIFTEENTH CENTURIES

- 1373. A form of dancing mania known as the *Danse de St. Jean* spreads through France and Flanders.
- 1393. On January 29th Charles VI of France burnt in a *mascarade* in which he takes part.
- 1439. Pope Eugenius issues a Bull authorising the dance of the *Seises* in the Cathedral at Seville.
- 1462. René d'Anjou, Count of Provence, participates in the *dance-fête, Lou Gré*.
- 1489. Bergonzio di Botta's famous banquet-ball in honour of the wedding of the Duke of Milan with Princess Isabella of Aragon, the ballet taking place during the banquet, and being composed of dancing, mime, poetry and music.

#### SIXTEENTH CENTURY

- 1511-1513. Henry VIII of England introduces "pageants" and "masques" at his Court ; and, in the latter year, himself takes part, Edward Hall, in his Chronicle, mentioning that "the King with eleven others were disguised after the manner of Italy, called a Mask, *a thing not seen before in England.*"
- 1581. The *Ballet Comique de la Reine*, by Baltazarini (otherwise, Beaujoyeux), produced at the Louvre in honour of the betrothal of the French Queen's sister, Marguerite de Lorraine, with the Duc de Joyeuse, and subsequently published by Ballard of Paris.
- 1585. The masque of *Lovely London* performed before the Lord Mayor of London.
- 1588. "*Orchésographie,*" by Thoinot Arbeau, Canon of Lengres, published, and describes the dances then in vogue, i.e. *pavane, gaillarde, tordion, coranto, la volta, canaries, gavotte* and *branles*.

1589-1610. Eighty ballets produced at the Court of Henri IV of France.

1597. *Daphne*, by the Italian composer Rinuccini, performed, the first Opera known to musical history.

### SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

1605. A masque performed at Hampton Court in celebration of the wedding of Sir Philip Herbert and Lady Susan Vere.
1609. *Ballets ambulatoires* instituted by the Portuguese, the first being given in celebration of the Beatification of St. Loyola.
1611. The *Masque of Oberon*, the first of several masques by Ben Jonson produced from now onwards.
1612. A masque by Chapman produced in honour of the wedding of Elizabeth, daughter of James I, to the Prince Elector Palatine.
1613. Campion's *Masque of the Golden Tree* performed on St. Stephen's night in the Banqueting Hall at Whitehall.
1614. A masque, by Browne of Tavistock, presented on January 13th at Inner Temple.
1615. A *Ballet des Chevaux* performed at Florence in honour of the Prince of Urbino.
1616. Jonson's masque, *The Golden Age Restored*, and, on Lord Mayor's Day, the Fishmongers' Company produce *Chrysomaleia*.
1617. Jonson's *Masque of Christmas* and *The Masque of Lethe*.
1621. Jonson's amusing masque, *News from the New World in the Moon*, produced.
1622. "Orchestra," a poem by Sir John Davies, Attorney-General for Ireland, is inscribed by the author to Prince Charles, and is described as an unfinished poem "expressing the Antiquity and Excellency of Dauncing."
1628. A *Ballet de la Cour du Soleil* produced at the Court of Savoy ; and the *Conquête du Char de la Gloire* at Rheims.
1630. Ben Jonson's masque, *Chloridia* (in which Henrietta Maria, Charles the First's consort, takes part), is performed at Somerset House ; and a curious *Ballet des Goutteux*, composed by the Duc de Nemours (himself a victim of gout), is produced at the Court of Louis XIII.

1633. *The Triumph of Peace*, a masque by Jas. Shirley, costing £21,000 to produce, performed by members of the Bar before the King and Queen at Whitehall ; the music by Wm. Lawes ; *décor* and costumes by Inigo Jones.
1634. A symbolic masque, or ballet, *Verité, ennemie des Apparences*, danced on the birthday of the Cardinal of Savoy.
1640. A *Ballet des Alchémistes* produced, and pomanders containing essences are presented by the performers to ladies in the audience, as in the more modern "cotillon."
1650. A *Ballet du Tabac* produced at Turin. The menuet first introduced to the French Court as a *branle* from Poitou.
1651. Louis XIV appears in a ballet, *Cassandra*, by Benserade, at Cardinal Mazarin's palace.
1651. *The Dancing Master*, by John Playford, first published in London, giving the dances and music then in vogue.
1653. Pécourt born.
1661. The first *Académie Royale de Danse* established by Louis XIV.
1663. Beauchamps appointed Director of *Académie*.
1672. The *Académie Royale de Danse* enlarged, becomes *Académie Royale de Musique, et de Danse*.
1674. Pécourt makes his *début* and presently becomes successor to Beauchamps as Directeur of the King's *Académie*.
1675. The first ballet seen at the Russian Court produced for the entertainment of the Tzar Alexis ; but the Russian Ballet not actually founded until 1735, when the Empress Anne appointed the French *maitre*, Lande, as ballet-master, with an Italian composer, Areja, to compose the music and direct the orchestra.
1681. Women dancers appear for the first time in Ballet, i.e. *Le Triomphe de l'Amour*, by Lulli, at the Odeon in Paris, the cast including the Dauphiness, the Princess de Conti, and a Mlle Lafontaine, the first *première danseuse* of the *Académie Royale*. Among dances now in vogue were the *courante*, *gigue*, *chaconne*, *passacaille*, *passepied*, *allemande* and *contredanse*.
1681. Birth of Françoise Prévôt, who becomes famous as *première danseuse* at the Opera, subsequently supplanted in popular favour by her pupil, Camargo.
1685. Production of *Le Triomphe de la Paix*, by Quinault and Lulli.

1697. *L'Europe Galante*, by La Motte, music by Campra.
1698. *Les Fêtes Galantes*, by Duché, music by Desmarests.
1699. *Le Carnaval de Venise*, by Regnard, music by Campra.

#### EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

1700. *Le Triomphe des Arts*, by La Motte and de la Barre, produced on May 16th.
1702. An opera-ballet, *Fragments de Lulli*, produced at the Paris Opera, a pastiche of selections from Lulli's *Fête Marine*, *La Serenade*, *Venitienne* and *La Bergerie*, arranged by Danchet and Campra.
1703. *Les Muses*, by Danchet and Campra, produced on October 28th; and on December 27th *Le Carnaval et la Folie*, by La Motte and Destouches, the latter revived again in 1719, and in 1730, 1738, 1748 and 1755.
1704. Death of Beauchamps, after nearly twenty years' service as dancer and *maitre de danse* at the *Académie*; first to essay invention of a system of choreographic recording.
1706. *Orchesography*, published in London, by John Weaver; also author of *An Essay towards the History of Dancing*, published in 1712, and a *History of the Mimes*, published sixteen years later.
1707. Birth of Marie Sallé, who becomes popular in Paris and also in London, where she appears under the management of John Rich (producer of Gay's *Beggar's Opera*) at the Lincoln's Inn Theatre.
1708. The revival of "Mime"; the Duchesse du Maine produces at her private theatre at Scéaux the fourth act of Corneille's *Horaces*, set to music by Mouret, and acted without words, as pure pantomime, with Balon, a noted male dancer, and Mlle Prévôt in the leading rôles.
1709. *Orchésographie*, by Feuillet and Desaix, published.
1710. Birth of Marie-Anne Cupis de Camargo, famous as dancer, and alleged inventor of the *entrechat*; entered the Opera in 1726, and died in 1770.
1710. Marcel, a male dancer at the *Académie*, becomes increasingly prominent as a master of the Minuet.
1718. Marie Sallé achieves an early success in a light opera, *La Princesse de Carisme*, by Lesage, author of *Gil Blas*, produced at the theatre of the Foire de St. Laurent, Paris.

1720. Début of Dupré, pupil of Beauchamps, and, later, master of Noverre.
1725. Successful appearance in London of Marie Sallé in *Love's Last Shift* at John Rich's theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields.
1726. Camargo makes a brilliant *début* in *Les Caractères de la Danse* at the Paris Opera.
1727. The Chevalier Jean-Georges Noverre born ; becomes famous as *maitre de ballet*, and author of *Lettres sur les Danses et les Ballets* ; retired in 1751, and died in 1810.
1729. This year sees the death of Pécourt, and birth of Gaetan Vestris.
1730. The *entrechat* invented, or rediscovered, by Camargo, famous for her dancing of *tambourins*, *rigaudons* and the *gavotte*.
1734. Marie Sallé appears in a classic ballet, *Pygmalion*, dressed in Greek costume, and creates a sensation.
1742. Marie Allard born ; becomes in time pupil of Gaetan Vestris, and mother of Auguste, known as "Vestr'Allard" ; also in 1742 was born D'Auberval, who becomes a pupil of Noverre.
1743. Madeleine Guimard born ; becomes one of the most famous dancers at the Paris Opera, and remains a popular favourite for some thirty years.
1748. *Début* of Gaetan Vestris, one of the greatest male dancers known to the history of ballet.
1750. Maximilien Gardel born at Munich.
1755. At Drury Lane, under the management of David Garrick, Noverre produces Mozart's *Ballet Chinois* with great success.
1756. Death of Sallé.
1758. Pierre Gardel born.
1760. Noverre's *Lettres sur la Danse* published ; birth of Auguste Vestris ; Parisian *débuts* of D'Auberval and Max. Gardel ; ballets produced at the Court of the Duke of Wurtemburg, Stuttgart, under the direction of Noverre.
1762. Guimard makes her first appearance at the Paris Opera as "Terpsichore" in *Les Caractères de la Danse*.
1765. Noverre's production of *Medea* at Opera.
1766. The *pirouette* said to have been introduced for first time by Mlle Heinel, pupil of the acrobatic dancer, Lepicq.

1772. Conventional stage-masks in ballet discarded by Gardel, on taking the place of Gaetan Vestris in *Castor and Pollux*; début of Auguste Vestris in *La Cinquanteine*.
1775. Noverre appointed *maître de ballet* at Paris Opera.
1781. Paris Opera, i.e. *Académie Royale*, burnt down; D'Auberval becomes *maître de ballet* at Opera, retiring three years later.
1782. "Works of M. Noverre" published in English, London.
1787. Pierre Gardel becomes *maître de ballet* at Paris Opera; death of Maximilien Gardel.

## NINETEENTH CENTURY

1800. Gaetan Vestris retires; dies eight years later.
1803. Carlo Blasis born at Naples.
1804. Marie Taglioni born at Vienna.
1808. Thérèse Elssler born.
1810. Death of Noverre; birth of Fanny Elssler.
1816. Death of Guimard.
1821. Birth of Fanny Cerito at Naples; Lucile Grahn born at Copenhagen.
1822. Marie Taglioni makes her *début* at Vienna.
1827. Taglioni makes her Parisian *début* at Opera in *Le Sicilien*.
1830. Blasis's *Code of Terpsichore* published in London, the first standard work on the technique of the Operatic dance. From 1830 to 1840 Blasis is *maître de ballet* at the King's Theatre (His Majesty's), London; also in 1830 Taglioni appears with great success at His Majesty's, London, in *Zéphire et Flore*.
1832. First production of *Sylphide* at Paris Opera, with Taglioni as creator of title-rôle, and the art of Ballet becomes "taglionised."
1834. Fanny Elssler, appearing as a fairy in *Sylphide* at Paris Opera, is declared to have executed "*un trille de battements, come Paganini le ferait sur son violon*"; achieves increasing success till retirement in 1851, her best performance being in *Le Diable aux Boiteaux*. She excelled in, and popularised, the *Fandango*, *Cachucha*, *Cracovienne* and *Mazurka*.
1837. Death of noted dancer, and *maître de ballet*, Didelot; Carlos Blasis appointed ballet-master at the Scala, Milan.

1838. Death of Auguste Vestris ; Parisian *début* of Danish dancer, Lucile Grahn, at Opera in *Le Carnaval de Venise*, with great success.
1840. Death of Pierre Gardel.
1840. Carlotta Grisi makes her Parisian *début* at the "Renaissance," then appears at Opera in *La Favorita*.
1841. Carlotta Grisi creates title-*rôle* of *Giselle* with triumphant success. Fanny Cerito creates "Alma" at Her Majesty's Theatre in London.
1842. Laporte is succeeded by Lumley as manager of Royal Opera seasons at Her Majesty's.
1843. Cerito creates a sensation with her performance in *Ondine* at Her Majesty's.
1844. Grisi wins fresh distinction in *Esmeralda*.
1845. The famous *pas de quatre*, composed by Perrot, performed at Her Majesty's, by Taglioni, Grisi, Cerito and Grahn.
1850. Caroline Rosati (born at Bologna in 1827) makes a successful Parisian *début* in *La Tempesta*, followed in 1854 by her appearance in London.
1854. The "Panopticon of the Arts and Sciences" opened in Leicester Square, London, later to become known as the Alhambra.
1870. The "Panopticon" taken over by E. T. Smith, converted into a music-hall and called "The Alhambra," but unsuccessful until subsequently coming under management of Frederick Strange, of the Crystal Palace, who produces ballets, among the earliest being *L'Enfant Prodigue*, adapted from an opera by Auber, and a grand patriotic ballet, *Les Nations*, featuring a very "Parisian Quadrille," which costs the place its music-hall licence.
1872. Sergei Pavlovitch Diaghileff born, March 19th, at Novgorod. In London ballet is produced at Her Majesty's by Mapleson, with Mme Katti Lanner, a Viennese dancer of great repute, as *prima ballerina*.
1882. The Alhambra burnt down ; and, on rebuilding, becomes The Alhambra Theatre of Varieties, with Ballet as its chief attraction for over thirty years.
1884. Manzotti's famous ballet, *Excelsior*, produced at Her Majesty's Theatre, prominent among the cast being Enrico Cecchetti.

1885. Anna Pavlova born on January 31st at St. Petersburg.
1887. The Empire Theatre, on December 22nd under the joint direction of Augustus Harris and George Edwardes, and with H. J. Hitchins as manager, begins a prosperous career as a variety house, with Ballet as its chief attraction for over twenty-five years.
1891. *L'Enfant Prodigue*, a three-act play in mime, by Wormser and Carré (first production in Paris, 1890) now produced at the Prince of Wales' Theatre, London, with Mlle Jane May as Pierrot, and runs for months.
1897. In *Under One Flag*, a topical, patriotic ballet in honour of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, Mlle Adeline Genée makes her London *début* on November 22nd at the Empire, with which she was associated for nearly twenty increasingly triumphant years.

#### TWENTIETH CENTURY

1900. Isadora Duncan makes her London *début* at the Lyceum, during the Benson Shakesperian season; shortly follows with a special matinée at St. George's Hall under title *A Happier Age of Gold*.
1903. A "Society of Masquers" formed by Walter Crane.
1906. Dances from Playford's *Dancing Master* (1651), revived by Miss Nellie Chaplin with her company's performance of *Ancient Dances and Music*.
1910. Anna Pavlova opens her first London season, on April 18th, with Mordkin, at the Palace Theatre. At the Coliseum, Karsavina, Baldina and Kosloff appear in a version of *Giselle*.
1911. A "Season of Russian Ballet," organised by M. Serge de Diaghileff, with M. Michael Fokine as Choreographic Director and M. Alexandre Benois as Artistic Director, opens in July at the Royal Opera, Covent Garden; Mme Pavlova appears at the Palace; the English Folk Dance Society is founded by Cecil J. Sharp; and *Sumurun*, a wordless mime-play in seven scenes, produced at the Coliseum, where also Mme Genée appears in a ballet, *Butterflies and Roses*.
1912. Another Diaghileff season at Covent Garden; and Mme Genée achieves a new triumph with her exquisite production, *Camargo*, at the Coliseum.
1913. Pavlova at the Palace; Mme Lydia Kyasht is followed in *Titania* at the Empire by Miss Phyllis Bedells; the Diaghileff

Company again at Covent Garden, and subsequently at Drury Lane.

- 1914. Mme Genée revives the ballet from *Robert the Devil*, produced by her uncle, M. Alexandre Genée, at the Coliseum.
- 1915. The production of *The Vine* and *Pastorale*, with Miss Phyllis Bedells as *prima ballerina*, marks the close of ballet production as a leading feature of the Empire programme for some thirty years. At the Coliseum Mme Genée appears in *La Danse*, Mme Kyasht in *Gavotte*, and Mme Astafieva in a special performance of Jean Nogue's *Theban Night*.
- 1916. Mme Genée appears at the Coliseum in *The Pretty 'Prentice*, and, at the Alhambra, in *Spring*, composed by Sir Frederick Cowen, after which Ballet, having been a regular feature of the Alhambra programmes for some forty years, is replaced by revue.
- 1917. Mme Genée has a farewell season at the Coliseum, where also Mme Kyasht appears in a version of *La Fille Mal Gardée*, and Astafieva is seen in a Swinburnian ballet, *Before Dawn*.
- 1918. The Diaghileff Company have a season at the Coliseum, with Cecchetti as *maître de ballet* and Mme Lopokova and Massine heading the company.
- 1919. At close of their winter season at the Coliseum the Diaghileff Company go to the Alhambra, with Mme Karsavina as an important addition to the cast ; Mlle Ninette de Valois is *première danseuse* at the Royal Opera, Covent Garden ; the Ginner-Mawer Company give the first of a series of annual performances of Dance and Mime at the Memorial Theatre, Stratford-on-Avon ; and *The Dancing Times* organises the first of many annual " Sunshine " matinées.
- 1920. The Pavlova Company at Drury Lane for eight weeks ; Karsavina appears in the Barrie fantasy, *The Truth about the Russian Dancers*, at the Coliseum ; Bantock's setting of Dowson's *Pierrot of the Minute*, given at Covent Garden, with Phyllis Bedells as *première*, and the Diaghileff Company appears at Covent Garden. As outcome of first of a series of "Dancers' Circle" Dinners organised by *The Dancing Times*, the Association of Operatic Dancing is founded on December 31st, with Mme Adeline Genée as President.
- 1921. Special performance of Barrie's *Pantaloons* at Coliseum, cast including Karsavina, Novikoff, Albert Chevalier, Alfred Lester and Violet Loraine ; also at Coliseum, a Danish Ballet company, headed by Elma Jorgen-Jansen and John Andersen, from the Royal Theatre, Copenhagen, appear in a scene from

- Sylphide*. The Diaghileff Company appear first at the Prince's Theatre, then at Alhambra ; and an interesting "British Ballet" season is directed by Miss Marion Wilson at the Kingsway.
1922. Foundation of the "Cecchetti Society." At the Coliseum Mme Lopokova produces *The Masquerade*, with Ninette de Valois, Woizikowski and Slavinsky in the cast ; other visitors to the Coliseum including the Ruth St. Denis and Ted Shawn Company, Mme Karsavina, Yvonne Daunt and the Sakharoffs.
1923. Pavlova has a season at Covent Garden ; Mme Genée takes part in the Operatic Association's *matinée* at the Gaiety. The Association of Teachers of the Revived Greek Dance is founded by Miss Ruby Ginner.
1924. Pavlova again at Covent Garden ; there is another Diaghileff Season at the Coliseum, the cast including Anton Dolin ; *Hiawatha* is produced for the first time at Albert Hall. Mme Malvina Cavallazzi, a distinguished dancer and mime long associated with the Empire Theatre, dies at Ravenna.
1925. The Pavlova Company at Covent Garden in a revival of *Giselle* ; the Diaghileff Company at the Coliseum. Death of Mr. C. Wilhelm, designer for many years of so many artistic and successful Empire ballets.
1926. The Diaghileff Company first at His Majesty's and subsequently at Lyceum. At Coliseum Anton Dolin and Phyllis Bedells ; at the Palladium, Dolin and Iris Rowe in a Dolin-Doone ballet, *A Flutter in the Dovecot*.
1927. Karsavina and Dolin in *Spectre de la Rose* at Coliseum ; Diaghileff Company at Prince's Theatre ; the Pavlova Company at Covent Garden. Death of Isadora Duncan.
1928. H.M. the Queen graciously accords her patronage to the Operatic Association. An "All-British Ballet" *matinée* produced by M. Edouard Espinosa at the Winter Garden. The Diaghileff Company at His Majesty's. Death of the Cavaliere Enrico Cecchetti.
1929. *Coppélia* revived by the Operatic Association at a special *matinée*. Irene Mawer and Company revive *L'Enfant Prodigue* at the Arts Theatre in January. At the Coliseum the Bodenweiser Company appear ; at Covent Garden the Diaghileff Company. Death of Sergei Diaghileff.

1930. Inaugural dinner of newly formed Camargo Society, their first performance being given at the Shaftesbury Theatre. The Marie Rambert Dancers appear at the Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith.
1931. Death of Mme Anna Pavlova at The Hague on January 22nd. The "Ballet Club" is founded. The Camargo Society produces *Job* and *Façade*. Mme Ida Rubinstein appears at Covent Garden. Under the direction of Miss Ninette de Valois a permanent Ballet is established by the Vic-Wells Company.
1932. At the Kongelige Teater, Copenhagen, on September 25th, an English Ballet Company, including Ninette de Valois, Phyllis Bedells, Alicia Markova, Ruth French, Anton Dolin, Harold Turner and other noted dancers, make a very successful appearance, the audience including the Danish Royal Family and H.R.H. the Prince of Wales.
1933. At the Savoy Theatre the German "Ballet Joos," one of their more noteworthy productions being the symbolic *La Table Verte*; and at the Alhambra the "Ballets Russes de Monte Carlo" prove a popular attraction for some weeks with a programme including such diverse elements as *Les Sylphides* and Massine's symbolic production, *Les Presages*.
1934. Return visits of both the "Ballet Joos" and "Ballets Russes"; and a "Dancers' Circle" Dinner given in honour of the Vic-Wells Ballet under Miss Ninette de Valois.
1935. Successful season of the Marie Rambert Ballet at the Duke of York's Theatre; the National Ballet of Lithuania at the Alhambra. A "Dancers' Circle Dinner" given in honour of Miss Alicia Markova.

# INDEX

## A

Académie Royale de la Danse, 100, 126, 145, 171  
 Acropolis, 34  
 Addison, Joseph, 122 *et seq.*  
 Æschylus, 21, 26  
 Aimée. *See* Augier, A. C.  
 Albert, dancer, 178  
 Albery, J., dramatist, 222  
 Alexandreine, 178  
 Alhambra, London, 213, 219 *et seq.*  
 Allan, Maud, 262  
 Allard, Marie, dancer, 148  
 Allemand, 73, 109  
 Almain, 78  
 Anjou, René d', 48  
 Anka, Cornélie d', 221  
 Anne of Denmark, 79  
 Apollo, Dances in honour of, 32  
 Arbeau, Thoinot, 46, 62, 67  
 Argentina, La, 287  
 Aristotle, 28  
 Arnould, Sophie, actress, 153  
*Art de la Danse*, 168  
 Artemis, 32  
 Arundale, Sybil, 228  
 Astafieva, Mme, dancer, 270  
 Athenæus, 19  
 Athens Museum, 26  
 Attic Theatre, the, 29  
 Aubades, 71  
 Augier, Anne Catherine, 150  
 Augustus, Emperor, 41  
 Auguzzi, Mlle, 237  
 Aumale, Duchess d', 55

## B

Baif, playwright, 49  
*Baladoires*, 45  
 Ballets, dances, mimes and plays :  
*Æolus, King of the Winds*, 87  
 Agamemnon, 39  
 Alchemists, *Ballet of*, 93  
*Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves*, 227  
*All in a Garden Greene*, 61  
*All the Year Round*, 231  
 Alma, 206  
 Amarilla, 275  
*Amour Malade*, L', 99  
*Amours Déguisés*, Les, 99  
*Amour Vengé*, L', 177  
 Anthoinette, 71  
 Aphrodite, 32  
*Arlequin, Emperor in the Moon*, 113  
*Arlequin, Man of Fortune*, 113

*Arlequin Proteus*, 113  
*Armies of the Earth and Air*, 287  
 Artemis, 32  
 Asmodeus, 224  
 Aunt Anne, 287  
*Automne Bacchanale*, L', 187, 263  
*Autumn Leaves*, 275  
*Babil and Bijou*, 223  
*Bacchus et Ariane*, 129  
*Baigneuse, La*, 262  
*Baisons nous, belle*, 71  
*Bayaderes, Les*, 194  
 Beatrix, 205  
*Beauties of the Harem*, The, 220  
*Beauty and the Beast*, 227  
*Belle au Bois Dormant, La*, 194  
*Belle Hélène, La*, 220  
*Belle Leonora, La*, 235  
*Belle of New York, The*, 251  
*Belle of the Ball, The*, 250 *et seq.*  
*Black Crook, The*, 220  
*Bridal of Helen, The*, 27  
*Britannia's Realm*, 229  
*Bugle Call, The*, 248  
 Cadmus, 105  
*Caractères de la Danse*, 133, 152  
 Carmen, 230  
*Carnaval, Le*, 270, 279  
*Carnaval de Venise, Le*, 194, 209, 222  
 Cassandra, 97  
*Castor and Pollux*, 186  
*Cephalus and Procris*, 285  
*Chercheuse, d'Esprit, La*, 152, 155  
 Chicago, 225  
 Cicilien, Le, 99  
*Cinderella*, 248  
*Cinq Seul, Le*, 208  
*Cleopatra*, 240, 270, 271  
*Cloches de Corneville, Les*, 234  
*Columbine, Advocate*, 113  
 Comets, 90  
*Conquest of the Car of Glory, The*, 88  
*Coppélia*, 237, 248, 254, 286  
*Cog d'Or, Le*, 272  
*Corn Harvest, The*, 287  
*Court of the Sun, The*, 89  
*Crowded Houses*, 221  
*Cupid in Arcadia*, 221  
 Curiosity, 90  
*Dance Dream, The*, 236  
*Dancing Master, The*, 256  
*Daphnis and Chloe*, 31  
*Day in Paris, A*, 254  
*Demon's Bride, The*, 220  
*Devil's Forge, The*, 230  
*Diable aux Boiteaux, Le*, 181

- Diana*, 240  
*Divorce*, 113  
*Don Juan*, 186, 220  
*Don Quixote*, 225, 226  
*Dream of Wealth, The*, 240  
*Dreams*, 90  
*Dryads, The*, 253, 254  
*Duel in the Snow, A*, 240  
*Dying Swan, The*, 275  
*Elements, The*, 86  
*Empire of the Sun, The*, 90  
*Endymion*, 149  
*Enfant Prodigue, L'*, 110, 219, 233, 287  
*Entente Cordiale, L'*, 232  
*Eoline*, 209  
*Espagnol*, 282  
*Eternity*, 91  
*Europa*, 259  
*Fashion*, 90  
*Fausse Prude, La*, 118, 119  
*Faust*, 242  
*Faust Up-to-Date*, 214  
*Faun, The*, 257  
*Felicité Publique, La*, 91  
*Femina*, 236  
*Fernando Cortez*, 186, 194  
*Fête Galante*, 249  
*Fêtes d'Adam, Les*, 154  
*Fêtes d'Hebe, ou les Talents Lyriques*, 155  
*Fêtes de l'Amour et de Bacchus*, 103, 104  
*Fidelia*, 225  
*Fille de Madame Angot, La*, 221  
*Fille de Marbre, La*, 208  
*Fille du Bandit*, 209  
*Fille du Danube, La*, 205  
*Fire Bird*, 279  
*Flora*, 97  
*Flore et Zephiré*, 177, 178  
*Florentine Picture*, 285  
*Gay City, The*, 226  
*Geisha, The*, 251  
*Gemma*, 208  
*Giselle, ou les Willis*, 203, 205, 238, 297  
*Giiana, La*, 199  
*Gli Gelosi*, 117  
*Golden Wreath, The*, 227  
*Grand Duchess, The*, 222  
*Green Table*, 287  
*Gretna Green*, 229  
*Handy Man, The*, 229  
*Happier Age of Gold, The*, 265  
*Happy Shipwreck, The*, 177  
*Harlequin Prince Happy-go-Lucky, 220*  
*Harlequin Sorcerer*, 114  
*Hirondelle, L'*, 249  
*Hammage aux Belles Viennoises, 282*  
*Horaces, Les*, 108, 114  
*Horoscope, The*, 206  
*Hue and Cry after Cupid*, 79  
*Hurly Burly*, 238  
*Hymn to the Sun*, 284  
*Illusions*, 90  
*Impatiences L'*, 99, 105  
*In Japan*, 229  
*Inspiration*, 229  
*Iphigenie in Aulide*, 186  
*Isabelle*, 113  
*Jack Ashore*, 227  
*Job*, 286  
*Joli Parfumeuse, La*, 220  
*Judgment of Flora, The*, 87  
*Jugement de Paris, Le*, 210  
*Lac des Fées*, 206  
*Lady Henriette*, 209  
*Lady of the Locket, The*, 238  
*Laura and Lenza*, 177  
*Leandre*, 113  
*Lovely London*, 78  
*Love's Labour's Lost*, 62  
*Love's Last Shift*, 128  
*Lysistrata*, 287  
*Masque of Blackness, The*, 79, 80  
*Masque of Hymen*, 79  
*Medea*, 138, 149  
*Medea and Jason*, 147  
*Melusine*, 224  
*Mennon*, 223  
*Merchant of Venice, The*, 58, 60  
*Mes Passe-Temps*, 164  
*Midsummer Night's Dream, A*, 58, 265  
*Miller Duchess, The*, 247  
*Mirza*, 155  
*Mountain Sylph, The*, 220  
*Mount Lycaeus*, 287  
*Mysteres d'Isis, Les*, 186  
*Napoli*, 228  
*Nations, Les*, 220  
*Ninette à la Cour*, 155  
*Nymphidia*, 62  
*Old China*, 246  
*Ondine*, 206  
*On the Square*, 235  
*Oriella*, 224  
*Orphee aux Enfers*, 221  
*Our Army and Navy*, 224  
*Our Crown*, 246  
*Our Lady's Juggler*, 287  
*Papillons, Les*, 245  
*Paquita*, 235  
*Parisiana*, 233  
*Pastorale Comique, La*, 99  
*Peré, The*, 204, 205  
*Perseus*, 105

- Petite Heberlé, La*, 202  
*Petite Mademoiselle, La*, 223  
*Pétroushka*, 279  
*Picnic, The*, 284  
*Pierrot Poete*, 287  
*Pierrots at Versailles*, 287  
*Plaisirs, Les*, 99  
*Poule aux Œufs d'Or*, 222  
*Prelude*, 285  
*Premier Navigateur, Le*, 156  
*Présages*, 288  
*Press, The*, 244  
*Pride*, 284  
*Princess de Carisme*, 127  
*Princess of Trebizond*, 222  
*Psyche*, 236  
*Pygmalion*, 128, 129  
*Queen of Spades, The*, 233, 234  
*Raillerie, La*, 99  
*Reception d'une jeune Nymphe à la Cour de Terpsichore*, 193  
*Red Shoes, The*, 228  
*Rip Van Winkle*, 227  
*Robert the Devil*, 225  
*Robin et Marion*, 46  
*Roi Carotte, Le*, 220  
*Roman de la Rose*, 46  
*Romanesque, La*, 71  
*Romeo and Juliet*, 57, 59  
*Rose d'Amour*, 239  
*Rose de Seville, La*, 214  
*Rosière, La*, 155  
*Rothomago*, 223  
*Round the Town*, 241  
*Round the World*, 256  
*Santa Caterina*, 287  
*Sacre du Printemps*, 271  
*Sappho and Phaon*, 177  
*Scheherazade*, 268, 279  
*Sculptor and the Poodle*, 224  
*Seaside*, 245  
*Seven Kings of China*, 87  
*Sicilien, Le*, 194  
*Si j'aime, ou non ?* 71  
*Sioux, The*, 224  
*Sir Roger de Coverley*, 250  
*Sleeping Beauty, The*, 224, 275  
*Soldiers of the Queen*, 228  
*Sophonisbie*, 49  
*Spectre de la Rose, Le*, 272, 283  
*Spring Song*, 265  
*Straussiana*, 286  
*Sylphide, La*, 193, 195, 205, 206, 209, 212, 270, 279  
*Sylph of the Glen, The*, 220  
*Sylvia*, 237, 257  
*Tempest, The*, 258  
*Temps, Le*, 99  
*Temps de la Paix*, 105  
*Temps Eternel, Le*, 91  
*Temptation*, 225  
*Theodora*, 43  
*Timothy and the Blue Mantle*, 287  
*Titania*, 258, 259  
*Tobacco, Ballet of*, 93  
*Traditors my fa morire*, 71  
*Tribulations d'un Maître de Ballet, Les*, 199  
*Tribute of the Divinities*, 87  
*Trilby*, 196  
*Triomphe de Bacchus*, 99  
*Triomphe de l'Amour*, 104  
*Triumph of Venus, The*, 98  
*Troilus and Cressida*, 62, 71  
*Truth*, 91  
*Twelve Goddesses, The*, 79  
*Two Flags, The*, 234  
*Two Gregoys, The*, 220  
*Under One Flag*, 242  
*Up the River*, 225  
*Verité ennemie des apparences, La*, 85  
*Vestale, La*, 194  
*Victoria and Merrie England*, 227  
*Village Festival, A*, 223  
*Vine, The*, 260  
*Vineland*, 247  
*Water Nymph, The*, 258  
*Which is Which*, 222  
*White Fool, The*, 287  
*Whittington*, 220  
*Wildfire*, 221  
*Yolande*, 221  
*Zanetta*, 224  
*Zephire et Flore*, 194  
*"Ballett,"* 61  
*Ballets Russes de Monte Carlo*, 274, 287  
*Balon, maître de danse*, 103, 106, 108, 114  
*Baltasarini* (see also Beaujoyeux), 53  
*Bartholomew Fair*, 61  
*Basse-danse*, 70  
*Bathyllus, actor*, 38, 39  
*Baudier-Laval, M. J.*, 103  
*Beauchamp*, 67, 101, 103  
*Beaujoyeux*, 52, 54, 74, 76  
*Beaumont and Fletcher*, 78  
*Beaupré, Mlle*, dancer, 172  
*Bedells, Phyllis*, dancer, 251, 255 et seq.  
*Berein, Francis*, 105  
*Berri, Duchess du*, 47  
*Bertrand, A.*, ballet-master, 221, 222  
*Bigottini, Mlle*, dancer, 173  
*Bishop, Will*, dancer, 242  
*Blasis, Carlo*, 17, 20, 183 et seq., 269  
*Blasis, Teresa and Virginia*, 188  
*Blaze, Castil*, 76, 104, 137  
*Blondi, dancer*, 103, 104

Bolm, A., dancer, 72  
 Bonfire dances, 45  
 Bordin, Maria, dancer, 234  
 Botta, Bergonzio di, 49, 50  
 Bouffon dances, 69, 74, 78  
 Bourdeille, Mlle de, 55  
*Brabant, Genèvieve de*, 222  
 Branchu, Mlle, dancer, 172  
*Brandons, danses des*, 45  
 Branles, 62, 69, 73, 285  
 Bridal dances, 27  
 Briggs, Hedley, 284  
 Bright, Dora, composer, 253, 267  
 Brissac, Duc de, 53  
 Britta, Mlle, dancer, 235  
 Brittany, 45  
 Brocard, Mlle, dancer, 178  
 Broughton, Phyllis, dancer and actress, 213  
 Browne, William, poet, 78  
 Byng, George, 228 *et seq.*  
 Byzantium, 42

## C

Camargo, M.-A. Cuppi de, dancer, 76, 109, 132 *et seq.*, 146, 250, 267  
 Camargo Society, 281  
 Cambert, composer, 101, 107  
 Campion, Thomas, 78  
 Campra, composer, 107  
 Canary, 62, 74, 78  
 Capriol, 68  
*Capriol Suite*, 285  
 Caracalla, Emperor, 41  
 Caroso, 67  
 Carré and Wurmser, 110  
 Casaboni, Josephine, dancer, 227, 228  
 Casati, M., ballet-master, 225  
 Cavalazzi, Malvina, dancer, 240 *et seq.*  
 Cave, Joseph A., 221  
 Cavendish, 59  
 Cecchetti, Enrico, 215, 276, 283  
 Celerier, 160  
 Cerito, Fanny, 192, 197, 205  
 Cerri, Cecilia, 227  
 Chaconne, dance, 76, 109  
 Chameroz, Mlle, dancer, 172  
 Champeron, 101  
*Chansons à danser*, 46  
*Chanson Pantomime*, 166  
 Chaplin, Nellie, Miss, 269  
*Charivari*, 47  
 Charles II, 107  
 Chaucer, Geoffrey, 47  
 Chevigny, Mlle, 171  
 China, 21  
 Church, attitude of the, 45, 48  
 Cibber, Colley, 16

*Cinquantaine*, 149  
 Circe, 55  
 Clerc, Elise, 248  
*Code of Terpsichore, The*, 188  
 Clermont, College of, 90  
 Clotilde, Mlle, dancer, 172  
 Coffin, Haydon, actor, 238  
 Collins, Lottie, dancer, 262  
*Colombe*, 113  
*Comédie Ballet*, 77  
*Comédie Française*, 148, 151  
*Commedia dell' Arte*, 115, 118, 119  
 Constantine, Emperor, 42  
 Constantini, "Octave," 120  
 Constantinople, 42  
*Contredances*, 109  
 Coppi, Carlo, 20, 229  
 Coranto, 62, 63, 69, 84  
 Cormani, Mme, dancer, 224, 230  
 Coulon, dancer, 172, 178  
 Courante, 71, 109  
 Covent Garden Theatre, 128, 157  
 Crystal Palace, 213  
 Curti, Alfredo, Signor, 20, 232, 233  
 Cypierre, Mlle de, 55

## D

*Dancing Master, The*, 256, 259  
 Daniel, Samuel, 78  
*Danse Grecque, La*, 33  
*Danseurs du corde*, 44  
 Dauberval, dancer, 152, 170  
 David, King, 42, 68  
 David, J. L., painter, 153  
 Davies, Sir John, 62, 71  
 Dekker, Thomas, 78  
 Delian dance, 32  
 Delphi, 34  
 Dervieux, Mlle, dancer, 155  
 Deshayes, M., dancer, 172, 177, 207  
 Desmarests, composer, 107  
 Desmatins, Mlle, dancer, 105  
 Despreaux, Jean, 156, 160, 161, 163  
 Destouches, composer, 107  
 Diaghileff Ballet, 274, 278  
 Didelet, Denis, 177, 276  
 "Disguisings," 76  
 Dolin, Anton, 278, 282, 283  
 Dolivet, dancer, 105  
 Dorat, poet, 155  
 Doric farce, 37  
 Dowland, John, 60  
 Drama, 21, 22  
 Drayton, Michael, 61  
 Drury Lane Theatre, 204  
 Dumoulin, dancer, 133  
 Duncan, Isadora, 262, 265

Dupré, Louis-Pierre, dancer, 104  
 Duvernay, Pauline, dancer, 178, 180

## E

Edwardes, George, 238  
 Egville, M. D', 177  
 Egypt, 18, 28  
 Eleusinian mysteries, 32  
 Elizabeth, Queen, 53, 60  
 Elssler, Fanny, 180, 181, 238  
 Elssler, Thérèse, 182  
 Emmanuel, Maurice, 33  
*Emmeleia*, dance, 31, 69  
 Empire Theatre, 237 *et seq.*  
 English Folk Dance Society, 289  
*Entrechat à quatre*, 136  
*Entremets*, 48  
 Epiphany mask, 57  
 Espinosa, Edouard, dancer, 259, 282  
 Espinosa, Judith, dancer, 229  
 Espinosa, Leon, 213  
*Essay on the Human Understanding*,  
 107  
*Essay Towards an History of Dancing*,  
 122  
 Euripides, 21, 26

Fabbri, dancer, 213  
 Fairs, 119  
 Farnie, H. B., 221, 223 *et seq.*  
 Farren, Fred, 249, 255 *et seq.*  
 Fedorova, Sophie, dancer, 270  
 Ferdinand, M., 178  
 Fernet, Millo, dancer, 104  
 Ferrabosco, A., composer, 60  
 Ferraris, Amalia, dancer, 213  
 Ferté, de la, 157  
*Fête-Dieu*, 48  
 Feuillet, ballet-master, 67  
 Fiorelli, 117  
 Florence, 87  
 Fokine, M., producer, 20, 279  
 Fontainebleau, 97, 105  
 Fouquet, 97, 98  
 Franceur, 160  
 Froissart, 47  
 Funeral dance, 24, 27

## G

Galant, F. du Désert, 101  
 Galeazzo, Duke of Milan, 50  
*Galliard*, 60, 61, 69, 71, 84  
 Gallini, 157  
 Gardel, Maximilian, 152, 156, 170

Gardel, Pierre, 170, 171  
 Garrick, David, 137, 146  
 Gascoigne, George, poet, 78  
 Gautier, Théophile, 20, 195  
*Gavotte*, 69, 73  
 Geltzer, Catrina, dancer, 274  
 Genée, Adeline, Mme, 111, 189, 242 *et seq.*, 251 *et seq.*, 266  
 Gherardi, Evariste, 113  
*Gigues*, 109  
 Giles, Thomas, 60, 82, 84  
 Gillert, Mlle de, 222, 223  
 Ginner, Ruby, 33, 35, 266, 287  
 Giuri, Mlle, dancer, 240  
 Godefroy, Jeanne, 120  
 Goncourt, Edmond de, 151, 163  
 Gosselin, Mlle, dancer, 172  
 Gould, Diana, 285  
 Grahn, Lucile, 192, 197, 208 *et seq.*  
 Greece, 18, 26 *et seq.*  
 Gregory, Pope, 42  
 Greville, Eva, dancer, 214  
 Grey, Sylvia, dancer, 214  
 Grigny, Jean de, 101  
 Grimaldi, Joseph, 36  
 Grisi, Carlotta, 145, 192, 197, 202 *et seq.*  
 Guerrero, Señora, dancer, 230  
 Guimard, Madeline, dancer, 151, 163,  
 168  
 Guise, Duchesse de, 55

## H

Hall, Edward, 57  
 Halle, Adam la, 46  
 Handel, G. F., 129  
 Hardouin, dancer, 106  
 Harlequin, 36  
 Harlequinade, 36, 114  
 Harris, Sir Augustus, 238  
 Hastings, Charles, 37  
 Hay, dance, 62, 73  
 Haymarket Theatre (King's), 177,  
 187  
 Heinel, *danseuse*, 148  
 Henry, dancer, 172  
 Henry III of France, 52  
 Henry IV, King, 77  
 Henry VIII, King, 59, 60, 77  
 Her Majesty's Theatre, 194, 204, 206,  
 215  
 Herodotus, 24  
 Hesiod, 26  
 Hippodrome, classic, 43  
 Hippodrome, London, 263  
*Histoire du Théâtre Italien*, 120  
 Hofschuller, Fräulein, dancer, 237  
 Hollingshead, John, 219, 225, 237  
 Homer, 26

*Hormos*, collar-dance, 32  
*Hylas, mime*, 39  
*Hyporchemata*, Greek dances, 31

## I

*Iliad*, the, 26  
*Illustrated London News*, 197, 204  
 India, dance in, 21  
 Interludes, 48  
 Ionic dances, 32  
 Isabel of Bavaria, 47  
 Isabella of Aragon, 50  
 Italian ballets, 105, 107  
 Italy, 86

## J

James I, King, 53, 77  
 Johanssen, dancer, 276  
 Jones, Inigo, 60  
 "Joos, Ballet," 287  
*Jongleurs*, 44  
 Jonson, Ben, 60, 61, 77, 78, 79, 85  
 Joyeuse, Duc, 52, 55  
 Jugglers, 44  
 Julian, Emperor, 42  
 Justinian, Emperor, 43

## K

Kalabis, dance, 32  
 Karsavina, Mlle, 111, 243 266 *et seq.*, 283  
 Kean, Edmund, 36  
 Kordax, comic dance, 31, 69  
 Kyasht, Lydia, Mlle, 253, 254, 256 *et seq.*, 274

## L

Lafontaine, Mlle, dancer, 104  
 Lambert, Constant, 286  
 Lanner, Katti, 20, 195, 213, 214, 238 *et seq.*, 245  
 Lany, dancer, 136  
 Laporte, 194  
 La Rochelle, 88, 89  
 Lawton, Frank, whistler, 235  
 Legnani, Mlle, 224  
 Leon, Virginia, dancer, 187  
 Le Peintre, Mlle, dancer, 104  
 Lepicq, dancer, 172  
 Leroux, Pauline, dancer, 180  
 Leslie, Fred, actor, 223  
 Lethbridge, Alice, dancer, 214  
*Lettres sur la danse*, 109, 138, 139  
 Levey, Florence, dancer, 214  
 Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre, 114, 127  
 Lind, Letty, dancer, 214  
 Locke, John, 107  
 Lopokova, Lydia, 286

Loseby, Constance, actress, 223  
 Louis XIII of France, 77  
 Louis XIV, 53, 96, 98, 99  
 Lucian, 19, 32  
 Lully, composer, 101, 102, 107  
 Lycurgus, 32  
 Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith, 285

## M

"Maccus," 37, 112  
 Macready, W. C., 36  
 Maine, Duchesse du, 108, 114, 115  
 Maintenon, Madame de, 118  
*Maitre à Danse*, 109  
 "Maneros," dance, 24  
*Mannequin Dance*, 285  
 Manzotti, producer, 20  
 Mapleson, J. H., 213  
 Marguerite of Lorraine, 52  
 Marie Antoinette, Queen, 139  
 Markova, Alicia, 286  
 Marseilles, 47  
*Mascarade*, 47  
 Masque, 47, 59, 61, 76, 79 *et seq.*, 85  
 Massine, 20, 288  
 Matthews, Julia, actress, 221  
 Maupin, Mlle de, dancer, 106  
 Mawer, Irene, 23, 28, 287  
 May, Jane, 111, 233  
*Medieval Stage, The*, 43  
 Medici, Anthony de, 87  
 Medici, Catherine de, 52, 53  
 Menestrier, Abbé, 18, 19, 84  
 Merceuil, Duchesse de, 55  
 Merry Andrews, 49  
 "Mezzetin," 113  
 Middle Ages, dance in, 41  
 Miller, Mlle, (Madame Pierre de Gardel), 171  
 Mime, 17, 23, 28, 29, 37, 40, 43  
 Molière, J. B., 77, 102, 112  
 Montclair, composer, 107  
 Montessu, Madame, 178  
 Mordkin, M., 263  
 "Morisque" dance, 73  
 Morris dance, 78  
 Morton, Charles, 221, 223  
 Mossetti, Carlotta, dancer, 235  
 Moul, Alfred, 227, 229  
 Mouret, composer, 107, 108  
 Muller, Rosa and Marie, dancer, 223

## N

Napoleon I, 172, 173  
 Narbonne, 44  
 Nazianzen, Gregory, 42

Nevers, Duchesse de, 55  
 Newnham-Davis, Lt.-Col., 254, 256  
 Nijinsky, 72, 270  
 Nivelon, Louis, dancer, 107, 114, 120  
 Noblet, Lise and Alexandrina,  
     dancers, 178  
 Nodier, Charles, author, 196  
 Nourrit, Adolphe, author, 196  
 Noverre, Jean Georges, 17, 20, 109,  
     137, 146, 147, 170, 276  
 Nuittier, 20

## O

"Octavie," 113  
 "Œdipus," 39  
 Opera-ballets, 77  
 Opéra Comique, Paris, 137  
 Orchésographie, 46, 67, 285  
*Orchestra, or a Poeme on Dauncing,*  
     62, 63, 71  
 Orleans, Duc d', 47

"Paggington's Pound," 61  
 "Palace Girls," the, 263  
*Palilia*, 45  
 Palladino, Mlle, dancer, 223, 241  
 Pantaloons, 37  
 Pantomime, 36, 37, 40, 44, 111  
 "Pappus," 37, 112  
 Paris, 41, 170  
 "Parisian Quadrille," 220  
*Pas des Déeses*, 200, 210  
*Pas de deux*, 24  
*Pas de quatre*, 197, 205, 214  
 Passacailles, 109  
*Passe-pieds*, 109, 110  
 Paul, M., 178  
 Paulton, Harry, actor, 223  
*Pavans*, 61, 69, 71, 73, 78  
 Pavlova, Anna, 111, 263, 273, 274  
 Pécourt, 67, 103, 105  
 Pericles, 34  
 Perignon, Madame, dancer, 171  
 Perregaux, banker, 157  
 Perrin, Abbé, 101  
 Perrot, dancer, 20  
 Persiani, Madame, singer, 206  
 Pertoldi, Mlle, dancer, 222, 223  
 Peslin, Mlle, 172  
 Petipa, dancer, 276  
 Picard, poet, 161  
 Pickering, William, 61  
 Picuet, Jean, 101  
*Pierre Plouman*, 47  
 Pindar, 26  
*Pirouette*, 25

Plato, 28  
 Playford, 61  
 Peoenian dance, 32  
 Porpora, N. A., 129  
 Porro, Signorina, dancer, 225  
*Prévôt, Françoise*, 108, 114, 133  
*Pro-orchestris*, 33  
 Punch, 37  
 Pylades, 38, 39, 54  
 Pyrrhic dance, 32

## Q

*Queen Elizabeth's Virginal Book*, 60  
 Quinault, 101

## R

Rambert Ballet, 281, 285  
 Rameau, 107, 109  
 Ravelli, 157, 158  
 Raynal, Guillaume, 101  
 Revel, composer, 107  
 Reece, R., 221  
 Reichstadt, Duc de, 180  
 Renaud, Jean, 101  
*Revived Greek Dance, The*, 33, 292  
 Rheims, 88  
 Rich, John, 114, 127 *et seq.*  
*Rigaudon*, 76  
 Rimini, 49  
 Ritual, 23  
 Rivani, 105  
 Rivière, Jules, 220  
 Roffey, Mme, dancer, 224  
 Roland, Mlle, dancer, 104, 134  
 Rome, Mime and Pantomime in, 36  
 Ronald, Sir Landon, 229, 232  
 Rosati, Caroline, 213  
 Royal Academy of Dance and Music  
     French, 97, 100  
 Roze, Mlle, dancer, 171  
 Russian Ballet, 273

## S

Saint-Edmé, 120  
 St. Cyr, Mimi, 262  
 St. Denis, Ruth, 264  
 St. Germain, Fair of, 119  
*St. Jean, danse de*, 45  
 St. John, Florence, 238  
 St. John's Eve, 45  
 St. Laurent, Fair of, 119  
 Sallé, Marie, dancer, 109, 114, 127  
     *et seq.*, 137  
 "Saltation," 27  
 Sampietro, Mlle, 224

San Carlo Theatre, Naples, 188  
 Sangalli, Rita, dancer, 213  
 Sanseverino, A. R., 87  
*Sarabande*, 76  
*Saturnalia*, 73  
 Saulnier, Mlle, dancer, 171  
*Sauter*, 26  
*Sauveuse*, 167  
 Savarin, Brillat, 50  
 Savoy, Cardinal of, 91  
 Savoy, Dukes of, 86, 87, 89  
 Scala, Flaminio, 112  
 Scala Theatre, Milan, 186  
 Scapin, 113  
 Scaramouche, 113  
 Sceaux, 108  
 Schollar, Ludmiller, 270, 271  
 Scotto, Abbé, 89  
 Seale, Julia, 227, 228, 234  
 "Sellenger's Round," 60  
 Selles, Christopher, 120  
 Shakespeare, 57, 59, 62, 71, 72,  
     112  
 Sidonius Appollinaris, 43  
*Sikinnis*, 31, 69  
 Sinden, Topsy, 251  
 Sismondi, Mlle, 237  
 Sliding steps, 63  
 Solo dances, 24  
 Sophocles, 21, 26  
 Sortis, Mlle de, 240  
 Soubise, Prince de, 153, 156  
 Sourdeac, Marquis de, 101  
 Sparta, 29  
*Spectator, The*, 107, 122 *et seq.*  
 Stanley, Kate, 221  
 Star dance, 24  
 Steele, Sir Richard, 124  
 Stevenson, R. L., 35  
 Storey, Fred, 225  
 Strange, Frederick, 219  
 Stuttgart, 138, 145, 147  
 Subligny, Mlle, 106, 107  
 Sully, Marshal, 78  
 Sunshine matinées, 281 *et seq.*

## T

"Tableau de Londres," 165  
 Tabourot, Jehan, 67  
 Taglioni, Maria, 20, 111, 173, 178,  
     179, 192, 197  
*Tailler, The*, 122  
 Temple of Terpsichore, The, 153  
 Théâtre Italien, 113  
 Thebes, 24  
 Theocritus, 27  
*Theoretical, Practical and Elementary Treatise on the Art of Dancing*,  
     187

Thespis, 21  
 Thevenard, 106  
 Tiberius, Emperor, 41  
*Tordion* dance, 70  
 Tortona, 50  
 Tree, Sir Beerbohm, 252  
*Trenchmore*, 78  
*Tresca* dance, 76  
 Trianon, 139  
*Triory de Bretagne*, dance, 73  
 Troubadours, 44  
 Trouvères, 44  
 Tchaikovsky, 275  
 Turin, 93  
 Tzigane, 224

## V

Valois, Ninette de, 282, 283  
*Valse*, 72, 167  
 Vaughan, Kate, 214  
 Vaux-le-Vicomte, 97  
 Veron, M., 180  
 Versailles, 97, 241  
 Vestris, August Armand, 72, 144, 149,  
     150, 152, 172  
 Vestris, Charles, 150  
 Vestris, Gaetan, 138, 144, 145  
 Vestris, Marie-Thérèse, 144  
 Vestris, Thomas, 144  
 Vestris, Violante, 144  
 Vicenti, M. de, 224  
 Victoria, Queen, 197  
 Vic-Wells Ballet, 281  
 Vienna, 138  
 Vigarani, 102, 105  
 Vincent, Ada, 242  
 Vismes, M. de, 150  
 Vokes, W., 248  
 Volinin, 72  
 Voltaire, 130, 134, 139  
*Volte, La*, 62, 69, 71

## W

Watteau, J. A., 115, 117 *et seq.*  
 Weaver, John, 67, 122 *et seq.*  
 Weisenthal Sisters, the, 264  
 Weston's Music Hall, 213  
 Wilhelm, C., 20, 244 *et seq.*  
 Wilson, Charles, 228, 230, 232  
 Wolsey, Cardinal, 59  
 Würtemburg, Duke of, 138  
 Zacharias, Pope, 45, 48  
 Zanfretta, Mlle, 111, 242, 244







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